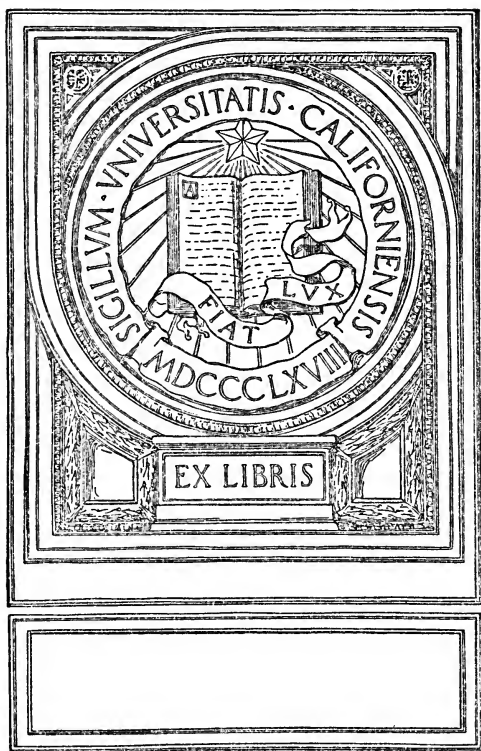


BERNICIA



AMELIA E. BARR



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BY

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BOW OF ORANGE RIBBON," ETC., ETC.

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BERNICIA.

CHAPTER I.

BERNICIA.

ON the morning of the 15th of March, A. D. 1748, Lord John Pomfret, a nobleman of the court of George II., and a member of the government of which Pelham was prime minister, was impatiently waiting the advent of his wife. As he did so, he frequently cast glances into the large oval looking-glass, which reflected his flashing black eyes, his swarthy skin, and the full dark curls of his flowing wig. He was a handsome man, with an air of great authority, and he was privately assuring himself that he was not unworthy of his lady's approval, when he heard the tapping of her heeled shoes upon the polished hall ; and immediately Lady Pomfret, dressed as for the Mall, in all the splendour of brocade, lace ruffles, patches, and powder, entered the room.

She was a small, fair woman, and not strictly beautiful ; but all her movements were made with "an air" that captured the imagination, and invested her with more than the power of beauty. Lord Pomfret advanced eagerly to meet her, and she looked at him with that pleased composure which is prepared to ac-

cept admiration and is conscious of its desert. Then with the manner of a queen she said :

"My lips and cheeks have been pinked and powdered, as you may see, sir. I hope, then, my hand will content you. And pray do I look handsome this morning?"

"You are entirely adorable, Fanny."

"Then sit with me a little, for I have things of importance to say to you."

"'Tis impossible to delay. I but waited to salute you. I have a world of affairs to attend to, and His Grace of Newcastle expects my presence."

"Let 'His Grace' wait. Courtiers are well accustomed to whistle and watch the door."

"You know what our expectations are in that quarter, Fanny?"

"I have none remaining. I know that we were promised seas and mountains; and that we have received nothing. You may grow devout, John, and fix your hopes on the next life; for you will obtain nothing from His Grace of Newcastle in this one."

"I asked nothing. Offers were made me. There are not two men in England to whom I would say, 'Your servant, sir.'"

"And but one woman?"

"But one woman; your adorable self, dear Fanny."

"I am very sensible of your affection. What think you? My sister Bernicia is in town. She sent me word of her arrival yesterday morning, but her messenger found me gone to Richmond; and so returned this morning."

"How unfortunate!"

"Thus you see me ready for my coach. I am going

as far as Bloomsbury myself. I have heard wonders of the house my Uncle Bouverie has just finished. It is said to be carved, and satined, and gilded, and looking-glassed like a palace. I am told there is not a cup, or a rug, or a rag in it, under one hundred years old."

"Some such things I have heard also. Where will these traders grow to?"

"I shall bring Bernicia back here with me."

"That would be imprudent. How can you propose anything so risky? Her very name will rouse suspicion. People will ask what a Cresswell is doing in our home, pledged as we are to the House of Hanover."

"Speak for your own pledges, John. If you are not sure under 'which king' you live, I am," and she folded back with a smiling pride her sacque of blue brocade, and showed over her heart the white rose of Stuart.

He began to bluster at the emblem. "I will not suffer it in my house!" he cried.

"I will then remove myself from your house," answered Lady Pomfret. "I am mightily tired of you beginning every day with an *Io Poean* to that snuffy German usurper. And you know, John Pomfret, that your heart is with the Stuarts, and that you are a miserable impostor!"

"Gracious Heavens! Have you lost your senses, Fanny?"

Then she looked at him steadily, and he bit his lip and laughed softly, and said "Egad, Fanny! What a woman you are! I suppose Bernicia could put 'Cresswell' behind some other name?"

"That is not supposable."

"But it is a question of safety to ourselves. All England knows that your father, Sir William Cresswell, and your brother James——"

"Are among the illustrious headless. I thank God for their faithful lives, and their honourable deaths. All England knows also that my brother Harry is with the king—over the water. What then? Is the little Hanover man afraid of a girl-child? Are you expecting Bernicia to plot treason? Do you think I will help her? I tell you willingly, I would if I could, but when the last opportunity is taken away, what can we do?"

"Look you, Fanny! you treat me very unkindly. You prejudice my affairs beyond redemption."

"I am a miracle of kindness compared with many notable women. Seven nights gone by, did not the Duchess of Queensberry at her masquerade, dress her duke in tartans? Could anything have been more insulting to the Usurper at this time?"

"The Duchess of Queensberry is as mad as a March hare."

"The weather is so very Marchy, that we are all mad, I think. But having agreed to my plans about Bernicia, I need not ask your presence longer."

"Your plans! Have I yet heard them, Fanny?"

"Indeed, they are unfinished. We can consider them to-night. The duke is doubtless anxious for your private counsel. If I were you, I would give Newcastle one bow and his brother Henry two. If you can be of the least use to Henry Pelham, he will put you in the Ministry. As for the duke, he is not to be trusted, unless he stakes. But then, as *you* say, the whole Ministry is as mad as March hares."

She was settling her dress over her hoop, and turning her feet right and left to see if the silver clocks on her silk stockings were straight, and Pomfret did not care to waste more time in a dispute whose certain conclusion for him was defeat. He went away with an air of depression, and Lady Pomfret called for her glass coach and her footmen, and crossing Holborn, turned to the fine new precinct of Bloomsbury Square.

It was not a long ride, yet she had time for many reflections before reaching her Uncle Bouverie's house ; for in that day the streets of London did not permit rapid movement of any kind. They were always crowded with coaches, chairs, and carts ; with porters bearing large burdens, and bullies swaggering great swords ; with funerals, christenings, weddings, street fights, and processions—all curiously jumbled together, and enveloped in a bewildering babel of cries from hawkers, ballad singers, and beggars.

From this passage of the streets Lady Pomfret's thoughts entirely separated themselves. They were in the wild, gray Northumberland ; or wandering about the lonely, lordless castle of the Creswells ; or flitting over the desolate field of Culloden and the awful spaces of Carlisle walls. The London crowd pressed close to the doors of her coach, but she was not conscious of a figure in it. She was watching her father, with his gigantic hillsmen at his side, pass like phantoms over Kildeer Moor and Carter Fells to join Prince Charles in his latest brilliant mistake. They were all gone, never to return. Then she thought of the sweet, sad mother who had so soon followed them to some land of which mortals know nothing at all ;

of the brother in France ; of the little sister Bernicia, who had been sheltered by a Creswell more prudent than the head of the family ; of the old home and estate, which would doubtless be forfeited to the new dynasty.

“ Root and branch ! house and lands ! ” she muttered passionately. “ All will go to some Hanover rat. Strange women will sit in my mother’s room, and some creature who never knew Northumberland will become Lord of Cresswell Castle. And all for those Stuarts ! those fatally unlucky Stuarts ! Would to God the prince had had manhood enough to die with the good men who died for him ! I could forgive him if, when all was lost, he had sought out that devil Cumberland and found his savage heart with a Stuart claymore. Oh, Charlie ! Charlie ! why did you not die with Perth and Keppoch ? ” Tears of wrath and sorrow dimmed her eyes, and when she had wiped them away she was aware that the lonely moors and mountains beyond Hadrian’s Wall were far off, and that she was in Bloomsbury Square, London, and approaching her uncle’s new mansion.

Outside it was not yet finished. Men were busy with the carved stone work and the polishing of the massive doorway. But a step within it placed her in an atmosphere of the past. The wide spaces of the hall were lined with pictures of the Bouverie family—men who had been famous in their generations—fighters with Cromwell, adventurous traders and mariners, great merchants, and, withal, ever to be found in the front when Dissent was struggling for religious liberty or political recognition.

She glanced right and left at the resolute, square-

jawed men in steel corselets or black velvet, and even paused a moment before the likeness of Captain Christopher Bouverie, standing silent and motionless by his mainmast while his wounded ship sunk to her grave off the ice-bound coast of Archangel. The house was very quiet, and the man who opened to her was shod in felt and moved with irritating deliberation. But she was unconsciously calmed by the atmosphere in which she found herself, so that when she entered the lofty room into which she was ushered she did so without hurry and with no evidence of the emotion she really felt.

There were two women in it, one of them near seventy years of age. She was tall and straight, with a dull fire in her black eyes, and a cap of Honiton lace over her snow-white hair. She sat by the fire knitting, and her brass needles moved with an incessant rapidity even when she was not looking at them. Lady Fanny courtesied low to her, and then put out her arms to a girl who had risen from an embroidery frame as she entered. This girl was Bernicia Cresswell, and Lady Fanny held her to her heart and gave full sway to the impetuous affection which at the sight of Bernicia swept every lesser consideration before it.

"My little sister!" she cried. "My little sister! You have become a woman! Oh, a charming woman! Oh, my darling, you are a very angel!"

"Granddaughter," said Mme. Bouverie, "you must try and speak without uttering false words. In this world, no woman is an angel."

"A thousand pardons, grandmother. Indeed, divines who pretend to know about women have

doubts about our being angels even in the next world. I will except my sweet mother, and doubt it myself. We are a bad lot. Confess to me, Bernicia, have you ceased to be angry, and to tell fibs, and to love the world and the flesh and the devil?"

Then Bernicia kissed her sister, and as she did so, whispered: "Take me away, Fanny. This house is neither for my age nor my liking."

Lady Pomfret had come with this intention, but she found difficulty in carrying it out. Mme. Bouverie, in spite of her age, was still controlled by passionate prejudices. It was twenty-seven years since her daughter Frances married, against her positive command, the North Country Jacobite lord, and she was still unforgiven. Her misfortunes and death madame considered a barely adequate retribution for her transgression of all the religious and social traditions of her own family. And she justified this lasting anger by the consideration that the evil inaugurated by the marriage of Frances Bouverie to Sir William Cresswell did not end with the authors of it. They were dead, and their first-born had been foredoomed to the scaffold. Yet the three remaining children manifested no leaning toward the faith of the home and the domestic life which the wilful Frances had abandoned.

On the contrary, her eldest daughter had married Lord John Pomfret, a High Churchman, a Tory, a natural hater of the Dissenters, and the frequenter of a court at once stupidly sensual and scornfully atheistic. And as the wife of such a man, Fanny Pomfret had become a fashionable woman and a partner in all the vices and follies then adherent to

the character. This further lapse had not been made without madame's interference. When her granddaughter had first come to London she had frequently sent for her. She had warned her of the snares of the world and the devil, and tried to teach her how to attain unto that peace of mind which comes from close walking with God. But even while giving such instruction, madame had always doubted the efficacy of it. Fanny Pomfret was a child of reprobate parents, and their works only could be expected from her.

It must also be admitted that Lady Pomfret had given some verity to this uncharitable fear, for she rapidly ceased answering with her presence her grandmother's invitations. She could not satisfy madame, and with the other members of the Bouverie family she did not come in contact. They were only three in number : her uncle, William Bouverie, and his two wards, George and Claire Abney. William Bouverie was usually in the city during the hours in which her visits were made, and the Abneys were both at famous Dissenting academies in the city of Gloucester.

At this time there were in the Cresswell family much speculation and curiosity concerning these children. It was said that William Bouverie had adopted them, and his own wife and child being dead, there was a natural fear that they were destined to inherit the Bouverie's wealth. So when Fanny Cresswell married and removed to London, she was urged by her mother to make peace with her relations, and to discover if possible the position of the two wards of the house.

It was more easy to fulfil the last condition than the

first. Lady Pomfret could not win her grandmother's affection, but there was no attempt made to keep from her knowledge the circumstances relating to George and Claire Abney.

"Their father was your uncle's friend," said madame. "They loved each other, and they were partners in business. So when Silas Abney and his wife died, it was natural that the children and their estates should be left in my son's care. He will deal justly with both."

"Did their parents die at the same time?"

"Within a few hours of each other. They had a fever which was prevailing at the time."

"How old are the children, grandmother? Are they a care to you?"

"They are no care to me. George Abney is fifteen and his sister Claire is ten years old. They are at good schools."

In some way Fanny Pomfret received the impression that her grandmother had not learned to love the orphans. It was also evident that the conversation about them had no special interest for her, yet Fanny continued it.

"Are they poor, grandmother?" she asked.

"They are both rich," answered madame. "Claire is especially rich."

"Is it not strange that the girl should be richer than the boy?"

"George Abney is the sole heir of his father. To her daughter Claire, Mrs. Abney left her own fortune, and she was one of the wealthy and famous Owen family."

"And pray why 'famous'?"

"You ought to know, Fanny, that the Owens have been pillars of Nonconformity and Dissent in all their generations. Claire's property is growing on all sides. When she is of age, she will be a great heiress."

"Pray can I call 'cousin' with George and Claire Abney?"

"The Bouverie and Abney families have intermarried. We are at least cousins and connections by marriage."

"And the Abneys are rich?"

"Very rich. Two of them have been Lord Mayors of London."

"Ah, then, I think I may call Claire 'dear cousin.'"

"You may pleasure yourself in the matter, Fanny."

"At any rate, she cannot call you 'grandmother'?"

"She cannot call me 'grandmother.' I am not apt to give myself away."

"Nor can she call Uncle William 'uncle'?"

"He has given both children that right since their birth."

"Then I must treat them 'cousinly,' I suppose?"

But in spite of this decision Lady Pomfret never became familiar in the Bouverie family. Her visits grew further apart, and then ceased altogether. Years passed, the gulf grew wider, and the death and ruin of Lady Pomfret's family hardened, rather than softened, her heart toward her relatives. She thought they had treated her mother cruelly, and she was glad that madame herself should suffer the pang of unforgiven love. And thus in the course of ten years the Bouverie and Pomfret families became complete strangers.

And if Lady Pomfret was little known to her city relatives, Bernicia Cresswell was not known at all. Her very name was a source of disapproval.

"Bernicia!" cried her grandmother scornfully. "Bernicia has a pagan sound. No one in our family was ever christened by a pagan name."

"It is the ancient name of Northumberland," said the child's uncle. "Frances could not call a girl 'Northumberland,' but Bernicia is not bad."

"But why 'Northumberland' in any fashion? Are there not Marys and Elizabeths and Catherines in the Bouverie family? names that have the English air, and sound sweet to every ear. I shall never be able to say this child's name without a feeling."

So Bernicia had been allowed to remain in Northumberland after her father's and mother's death. It was understood that Allan Cresswell—having taken no part in the rebellion—had been permitted to hold in charge the Cresswell estate until the further pleasure of the king should be known, and that Lady Cresswell on her deathbed had also appointed him a kind of guardian of her little daughter. To the Bouverie family it appeared a proper arrangement, and even Lady Pomfret was not inclined to dispute it. Her last memory of Bernicia was that of a hoydenish, unhandsome girl of fourteen, educated by her mother in such feminine arts as were then commonly taught girls, and by her father in all sylvan sports—and loving the latter much more than the former.

And in three years if Love does not grow cold, it does grow forgetful. Bernicia had been almost forgotten by her kindred in London, when there occurred one of those divine interferences in a destiny which

we ignorantly call "accidents." A certain Redesdale man, named Gilbert Hadley, stopped one day at Cresswell Castle and asked for the loan of a horse, his own having fallen lame under him. Allan Cresswell invited him to remain and rest, and the men became confidential over a bottle of wine. Then Hadley told Cresswell that he was returning from London, where he had been to secure the succession to the estate of his eldest brother, who had been slain at Prestonpans fighting with Prince Charles.

"I had no opinion of the Stuart cause from the first," he said, "and I begged brother Jack to give it the go-by, but 'out' he would, and no stopping him. Then close to my own ingle I sat, and no one could lay word or deed against me, and now I have my reward."

"Do you mean that you have legal possession of Hadley Keep and land?" asked Cresswell.

"That is what it comes to. My lawyer represented to the government that it would be a pity to dispossess one of the oldest families in England, when there was a loyal representative to carry it on; and the matter was so settled. There have been expenses, but what of that? I am now Master of Hadley."

This conversation made a great impression upon Allan Cresswell. If Gilbert Hadley had secured his brother's right, why might not Allan Cresswell take his cousin's place? He had been without offence toward the government, and the direct male heirs to Cresswell were all dead except young Harry Cresswell, who was even then an exile, in known sympathy with the Stuarts. He determined to apply at once for the succession.

But before carrying out this intention he felt that he must rid himself of Bernicia. She was too observant, and if she suspected his plans she would hardly hesitate at any means to defeat them. If he left her alone at Cresswell, she would think and think, and finally divine what business had taken him to London. All things considered, it was best Bernicia also should go to London. She would have a hundred new interests there to absorb her attention, and her presence would take away all reasonable grounds for accusing him of double dealing.

However, he did not wish her to go to her sister, Lady Pomfret. The two women would get to talking, then to doubting, then to watching him, and if so, Lord Pomfret would be their ally: and he had influence enough to defeat all his projects. He told Bernicia, therefore, that he was going to France to see her brother Harry. He said this step was necessary to preserve Cresswell, and that he hoped he would be able, if he reasoned with the young man, to persuade him to solicit a pardon from King George.

Bernicia scouted the idea, though perhaps in her heart she did hope for this arrangement. When people are ready to give up a point or a prejudice, they often bluster a little about their unwavering loyalty to it. So though she mocked at the supposition of Harry humbling himself to the Hanover usurper, she said she was willing to go to London and remain with her friends, while Cresswell went to interview his rebel cousin.

"But I will stay with my sister Fanny," she said, "for I know my grandmother and my Uncle Bouverie will give me but a cold welcome."

"Your grandmother has the first right to dispose of your movements," answered Allan Cresswell, "and also, your uncle's respectable house is a much safer place for a young girl than the court precincts into which Lady Pomfret will take you. For in London you will have to keep your tongue from evil speaking about King George, whether you like it or like it not, miss, and your wise grandmother will be a proper person to teach you to do so."

Then Bernicia lifted her black brows scornfully, and sang to its saucy melody,

"Geordie sits in Charlie's chair,
Bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie,
Had I my will he'd no sit there,
Bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie !
Keep up your heart, for Charlie fight,
Bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie,
Come what will, you've done what's right.
Bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie !"

"Stop such silly ranting, Bernicia. You are not fit for the world at all."

"Not for the Hanoverian world. I could not creep through a rat-hole of dishonour into it."

"You talk like a fool. It is time you were under restraint. I shall be thankful to resign you to Mme. Bouverie."

"Perhaps grandmother will decline me. I hope she may. I have no desire to hear uncle's household singing with their psalms, every morning and night, 'God Save Great George, our King.' I do not know what might happen if I were tempted to such a degree."

In such a wilful mood she had commenced her journey to London. She had no company but her

cousin, Allan Cresswell, and her woman, Tarsset. But then Tarsset was a multitude ; for she had been, in some way or other, part of the young lady's whole life. Allan Cresswell had endeavoured to separate them, but without avail, and he was perhaps as thankful to rid himself of the shrewd Northumberland peasant as of the provoking Jacobite young lady. The woman's out-looking gray eyes, in spite of their apparent indifference, he knew were constantly watching him.

After a tedious journey London was at length reached, and the little party went to the King's Head Tavern in Fenchurch Street to refresh themselves, and to rest over the Sabbath. The next day Bernicia was taken to Bloomsbury Square, and she certainly received no very enthusiastic welcome. Yet when the first unpleasant sense of surprise was over, her relatives were inclined to meet her tenderly. William Bouverie thought, as he kissed her, that his niece was very fair to look upon, and not much younger than his ward Claire, and that therefore they might become friends and companions. And madame's intents were also at first kindly and hopeful. Her daughter Frances had been the apple of her heart, and her disobedience and desertion the uncomforted grief of her life. Perhaps this beauteous child of the dead and unforgiven Frances had been sent as a balm for her heart wound !

But alas ! in a few hours Bernicia herself shattered all such expectations. At her first catechism she convinced madame that she was as much devoted to Episcopacy as to Jacobitism ; and with the passion of youth she had flashed into a championship of both, at the first breath of disapproval. And madame also

noticed that Claire Abney regarded this rebellious girl's disobedience with wonder and admiration. These conditions revealing themselves during the first day of Bernicia's visit, could not be considered of small importance. On the morning of the second day madame sent Claire with a note to the family minister, and thus she was not present when Lady Pomfret called, nor yet was the council she had been sent to seek available for the emergency. However, its request was only a form of madame's conscience. Under any circumstances she would have taken her desire, and at this hour her desire was to rid herself of a charge which she foresaw would be insubordinate, and which also was not unlikely to incite Claire to a personal assertion she had not yet dreamed of.

So, after some disputing and directing, Lady Pomfret was permitted to take away her sister for a season. Madame reserved the right of resuming her guardianship, and insisted upon a visit each week from Bernicia. She afterward regretted this stipulation, but there are moments in which personal feeling triumphs over wisdom even in the strongest characters; and madame, usually so careful of the future, forgot its interests while the question of her paramount right to direct her granddaughter's destiny was in dispute with Lady Pomfret.

But at length Bernicia was in her sister's coach and they were driving through London streets holding each other's hands. They could not talk above the babble, but the long repressed sisterly love burned in each heart with a warmth that hardly needed words, and yet which longed for their comfortable translation of feeling. The day was chilly and blowy, and so very Marchy

that they were glad to get out of the busy, disconsolate streets into the pleasant chamber of Lady Pomfret. There was a bright fire burning, and before it stood a Dutch table, set with a small China and lacquer tea service. On their entrance a black boy with a silver collar round his neck leaped from a scarlet blanket, where he had been dozing with a pet monkey in his arms.

"Presto, Jackanapes!" cried Lady Pomfret. "Presto, sirrah! Where is the hot water and the Hyson?" and as the negro ran to and fro answering his mistress's wishes, Bernicia looked at him with curiosity and some dislike.

"That is all. Go now to the cook. Say that it is two by the clock, and we dine at five. Tie up the monkey and look to the tables and the counters for the play to-night. And see that your scarlet spencer and scarlet stockings are whole. You may wear your silver chain and your belt with the silver bells. Quick! Go!"

"I suppose that is a negro," said Bernicia, with an affected shudder. "I have seen pictures of such creatures."

"Yes, a Barbary negro. Is he not delightfully ugly? Lord John bought him for a Christmas present for me. He is a willing little devil, so I keep him in my room, for he has but a sad time of it with the kitchen people. Oh, Bernicia, how good it is to see you! And how much has come to pass since I saw you last!"

"Since then our dear father and mother and poor Jamie are dead, and Harry is gone far away. No word comes from him. He might as well be dead

also, perhaps better ; for, Fanny, our people do declare that father's ghost walks constantly in Cresswell court-yard."

"Do you believe that, Bernicia?"

"Canobie has often seen him, and Tarsset also. You know how gracious father was to all men, and they say that even now, when anyone bows to the noble wraith, it lifts its bonnet in return. I have often watched all night, but he comes not to me."

"My poor little sister, how lonely you must have been!"

"Often I was very sad and lonely. I am glad to be with you, Fanny."

"And I fear the journey was hard at this time of the year."

"Indeed the roads were bad beyond all badness. And from Carlisle to Derby gibbets and skeletons were that devil Cumberland's milestones. Woe's me! for the brave men who died for one brave man! And ten times woe for the hundreds of brave men pinning in France and in strange countries for the land they will never see again. I tell you truly, sister, there are hours in which I hate the Stuarts! Yet when other people abuse them, then I have the contradictory disease, and am a mad Jacobite on the instant."

"The Stuarts are dead and buried, Bernicia. Prince Charles fell fighting at Culloden—or he ought to have done so. And the Hanover men are such cocks of the game, that they would not suffer an oak leaf or a white rose to grow in all England if they could find them. Let us talk of the present and the future, the past is beyond our recall. What is your thought of cousin Allen Cresswell?"

"He is for our injury. He will put himself in poor Harry's shoes. He is in London for that purpose. Tarsset says so."

"Was he kind to you?"

"He did not dare to be unkind to me. Tarsset never left my side, and there are yet many of our people in and around the castle."

"Where is he stopping?"

"At the King's Head in Fenchurch Street. He had an expectation of being asked to remain at the new house in Bloomsbury, but uncle was not inclined for his company."

"You came to issue with our grandmother very soon?"

"I was made known to her on Monday morning, and on Tuesday she began to ask me questions. I had not one answer that pleased her."

"What do you think of Uncle William?"

"He is grave and kind; but faith! those who cross his will need not expect any favour from him."

"Did you see his ward, the rich Claire Abney?"

"I spent Monday with her. *She*, if you like, is an angel. So good and so beautiful a creature is surely an accident in this dark world."

"And what of her brother, George Abney?"

"George Abney fell in love with me. He is a very proper young man, dressed handsomely and with fine manners."

"Bernicia! how can you tell yourself such unlikely things? George Abney fell in love with you! Nonsense! He has been taught to hate a Jacobite with a very hatred."

"Yet he fell in love with me."

"Pray how did you pass the time?"

"When grandmother was not listening, I talked with Claire about Northumberland. In the evening George and Claire sang duets by Mr. Henry Purcel, and I assure you they sang and played well. George played on the chamber organ and the flute, and Claire played on the harpsichord. And thank goodness! I was not quite ignorant,—for I have made good use of the old spinet at Cresswell,—so when George asked me to sing a song, I was not ashamed to do so."

"What did you sing? Have you seen the new pieces by Lully and Corelli?"

"*That!* for the new pieces by Mr. Lully and Corelli;" and she filiped her finger and thumb saucily. "I sang them the song of the Brownie that sleeps on Cresswell hearth—the sad song of the little brown man, because the time comes not for his deliverance :

" ' Wae's me ! wae's me !
The acorn is not yet
Grown upon the tree,
That's to grow the wood,
That's to make the cradle.
That's to rock the bairn,
That's to grow the man,
That's to make me free.' "

And George's soul was in his eyes as he listened to me. Then I sang the 'Mounting of the Cresswells,' and at the last verse George could not help joining in the summons :

" ' A Cresswell ! A Cresswell ! Yet ! Yet ! Yet ! ' "

After that grandmother stopped the music, but George

was spellbound ; and I know that he is mad in love with me."

"How many lovers have you left in Northumberland ?"

"The land is now barren of men worth a wedding ring. All the good men are in their graves or in exile. I used to sing about the castle in the daytime, just what the Brownie sang in the night-time.

" ' Wae's me, wae's me !
The acorn is not yet
Grown upon the tree,
That's to make the cradle,
That's to rock the bairn,
That's to grow the man,
That's to marry me.' "

"You shall have lovers to pick and choose from, Bernicia ; lovers plentiful as blackberries in season, so do not be in a hurry, but choose carefully."

"Still, as you know, Fanny, the devil goes through the blackberry vines on Michaelmas Day, and then it is over with them. How soon is a girl's Michaelmas ? When she is twenty years old ? Or may she stand till she is five-and-twenty ?"

"All this is the prettiest rant, Bernicia, but now I must call my woman and she shall dress you in the latest mode ; for Lord John seldom comes alone to dinner, and though in that black dress you look like the silver moon begirt with clouds, I am resolved to give your beauty a fairer setting."

Then Jackanapes was hurried here and there, and the woman to dress Bernicia was called, and in five minutes the chairs were littered with petticoats, and sacques, and stomachers ; with silk hose and red-heeled shoes, and

buckles and ribbons and laces in great variety. And Bernicia sat before the mirror and watched the transformation of her beauty. She had not before understood how much silvered brocade and pale satin and fine lace enhance the charms of youth ; nor felt the personal elation which comes with the last touches of a becoming toilet. She looked at herself a moment and blushed at her own beauty.

"You are fleshly perfect, Bernicia," said Lady Pomfret, with an air of admiration. "You have the glory of faultless health. You are like sunshine dancing on a spring day. You are so brilliantly animated at all points, I could fancy that you lived only on live things. Go to the parlours and admire yourself a little until your courtiers arrive. I shall have to wear diamonds and rubies if I am to stand at your side."

The parlours were long, low rooms, lighted with wax candles, and on the marble hearths bright fires of oak and ash logs were burning. There was a cabinet full of shells and corals in one corner, and in another recess receptacles for agates, minerals, and medals. Exquisite tables by Baptist, inlaid with flowers and fruits and birds of stone, held treasures of lacquerware from Japan, and of chinaware from Pekin. There were some good pictures upon the walls, and also an open harpsichord with a violin lying upon it.

Bernicia touched the tinkling notes, but she did not sit down to do so. She was unaccustomed to a large hoop and so much splendour, and her long brocade sacque was easier to manage upon her feet. So she wandered slowly round the room looking at the painted faces upon the walls. In the soft light of the

wax candles these faces of dead beauties and great men had a singular attraction.

"They look melancholy," she thought; "as if they were sad at no longer being alive. I wonder if they knew one another."

Suddenly there was a sound of voices and a gay laugh; then a footman flung wide the door and two gentlemen entered. One was Lord Pomfret. Bernicia remembered him perfectly. The other was a young man unknown to her. These things were seen at a glance. Her presence also was noted, for there was an instant's silence, and in that instant Bernicia did as her heart dictated, and went frankly forward with her hand extended, saying:

"I am Bernicia Cresswell. And you are Lord Pomfret? I remember you well."

"Most welcome, sister! If I did not remember you, it would be extremely easy to learn your face, and quite impossible to forget it. My friend Lord Rashleigh, I am sure, wishes to know you. And pray, miss, where is your sister, Lady Pomfret?"

"Fanny prepares herself for your admiration. She will be here anon."

The promise was hardly made when Lady Pomfret entered, and her presence put everyone delightfully at their ease. In a breeze of gay persiflage they sat down to dinner, Lady Pomfret crying:

"I give you leave now, my lord, to rail at the cook and the victuals, at the butler, and the wine, and the serving as much as it pleases you. Honours are now easy, for Bernicia and I together are sufficient for all malcontents."

"If you are not, then I also am on your side," said

Lord Rashleigh, looking at Bernicia with shining eyes.

Lady Pomfret acknowledged his allegiance by asking : " Pray why were you not at Holland House last night ? Mr. Fox gave a fine ball in the brave old place. All the beauties and all the uglies were there."

" Will you believe that I was at Lady Huntington's ? To be sure, you may laugh, but I can tell you that Methodism is becoming more fashionable than anything but brag or faro. This George Whitefield is indeed a wonder. You know Lord Bellhouse, and that he has never an idea that is not spotted with clubs, spades, hearts, and diamonds. Well, Mr. Whitefield has preached the cards out of his hands. It will be the saving of his estate. My Lady Huntington has even hopes of his soul."

" I have heard much of this Mr. Whitefield, and that he is a man of low birth," said Lord Pomfret. " Do people of any consideration go to hear him ?"

" Indeed, Lady Huntington's splendid house in Park Street was crowded with notables. Lord Chesterfield and Lord Bolingbroke were present, and Mr. Lyttleton and many others of equal rank and wickedness. But the Methodists, as Mr. Walpole says, love your big sinners ; and if so, they may have a plentiful harvest. My Lady Townshend was much offended at the sermon, which, she declares, mixes us of the pinnacle with the dust of the vulgar herd."

" Lady Townshend has a temper to quarrel with everyone," said Lady Pomfret. " She lives in a vinegar bottle, and as for being offended, we all know that she plays as deeply at Methodism as at brag."

"I think we neglect Miss Cresswell, who can know nothing of Mr. Whitefield and Methodism," said Lord Rashleigh. "Shall we take her to Richmond to-morrow, and to Drury Lane afterward? There is a new comedy which succeeds, and Garrick and Barry and Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Cibber are in it."

Bernicia acknowledged the invitation with a beaming smile, and the conversation drifted hither and thither, from the play to politics and court scandal. And the evening went with Lord Rashleigh as time had never gone before, though cards were not thought of, and there was no dancing, and no music but the fresh sweet voice of Bernicia singing of "Bonnie Bobbie Shafto," or of the little brown man that lived on the Cresswell hearthstone. But even Lord Pomfret was charmed with an evening so unusual and so domestic.

"I never missed my game," he said to Lady Fanny; "and I am sure the pretty Bernicia will set the tongues of the town wagging. I think Lord Rashleigh was struck with love for her. What do you think, Fanny?"

"I think he lost his senses entirely. But then he who does not lose his senses when in love, has no senses to lose."

"It would be a good marriage for Bernicia. Will she marry him, think you?"

"Perhaps—if he can find the lucky moment in which to ask her. That is the great favour in love affairs."

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF BOUVERIE.

THINGS thick and threefold crowded into the consciousness of William Bouverie one fine morning in May. There was a ship from Muscovy to unload, and one bound for China to dispatch. He had also been advised that some paintings from Holland were at the Customs, and he had promised to be present at the Old Jewry Meetinghouse to hear Frederic Christian Schwartz lecture. Now, Schwartz was on his way to the East Indies, carrying there the first tidings of the Gospel; a man of renown, full of the Holy Ghost, and willing to lay down his life for the heathen. And Bouverie was greatly interested in this new form of Christian labour. He thought of the rulers of the church and of the famous laymen who would march together up Ludgate Hill to the Chapter House of St. Paul's, and he felt, whatever came or went, he must also be there, to listen to the reports of foreign proceedings, and to vote upon the important questions.

It was this consideration that made him remember Bernicia; for it was Wednesday, and Wednesday was the day on which her weekly visit was made. For some time he had tacitly sanctioned the absence of George from the office when Bernicia was at the house, and he felt sure George would dislike any interference with this pleasant custom. He knew that

if the day was fine the young people were likely to row on the river, or ride out as far as Richmond Hill, or otherwise, that they would play and sing together, or talk confidentially a little outside of the grandmother's hearing, or that the girls would work at their embroidery and George read aloud to them.

And he was aware that George now lived for this weekly visit ; for though the young man was exceedingly reticent, love must be manifest, and George could not help discovering that he was in love with Bernicia Cresswell. This alliance Bouverie did not approve, but as yet he had offered no actual opposition. He hoped that familiarity might breed indifference, for his experience had in no way taught him the larger truth—that familiarity as often breeds liking as disliking.

However, he was not a man to hurry in any matter. He took his breakfast with deliberation, and called his household together after it for the daily worship. Claire knelt at his side and her hand lay under his hand as he prayed. Madame was not now able to kneel ; she stood upright with her eyes closed and her hands folded on the top of her ebony staff. The Bible was spread open on the table, a visible and sacred covenant, and the solemn tones of prayer for a little space pervaded the house.

Then there was a moment's silence, a muffled stir, and the servants shuffled noiselessly away. Madame seated herself and began to knit, and George walked to the window to watch for Bernicia's approach. Only Claire did not at once throw off the other worldness : she stood motionless, with her eyes cast down and a radiance on her face which was something more than

mere colour. Bouverie understood that it was the shining of the soul through its fleshly veil, and he drew her within his arm and blessed her. For men, conscious of their own worldliness, love to feel that there is on their hearthstones a soul purer than their own.

"George," he said, "Christian Schwartz lectures to-day. He is going to the East Indies ; going to preach Christ to those who have never heard the name of Christ."

"If he be sent of God, sir, it is a great honour for him."

"And after the lecture, there is the Mission Meeting at St. Paul's Chapter House. This thing sits near my heart. I desire to be present. Can you manage affairs without me?"

Before George could answer the door opened with a little flurry and Bernicia entered. She seemed to bring the sunshine in with her, for suddenly the room was flooded with it. "You see I met the spring," she cried, as she courtesied to her grandmother and uncle, and then with a pretty bit of affectation made George Abney a still deeper reverence. "I met the spring the other day when I was in Richmond Park," she continued, "and I have lilac'd and syringa'd myself to imitate her," and she spread out her pale yellowish-green petticoat and her lilac and cream-white gown, and touched her Leghorn hat, which was caught up and back, and looped down, with sprays of lilacs and syringas.

No one could resist the gay girl. Her uncle bowed with a mock ceremony and then kissed her. Madame smiled for a moment, and Claire embraced her with

happy affection. As for George, his whole soul was in the sense of vision. Until Bernicia disappeared with Claire his eyes were fixed upon her; even then his spiritual sight perceived the two girls treading the wide stairway hand in hand, with the lights of the many coloured windows glorifying them.

"George!"

George sighed heavily and answered, "Sir."

"There is the way of duty and there is the way of pleasure. You can take the one or the other, as it best pleases you."

Then the young man shook himself like one awakening from a dream. His spirit became erect and his body caught the strength of the attitude. "The way of duty is the way of pleasure, sir," he answered, "and I will take it on the instant."

"Then I shall go with content to the Old Jewry to hear Schwartz?"

"You may go without a care, sir. I hope, indeed, that you may better all your desires in this matter." With these words he went away, and Bouverie stood a moment at the window and watched him. "He is a good lad," he said, half to himself and half to madame, and the old lady answered:

"Have patience, William. Every man plays the fool once in his life."

"And George has a sufficient 'wherefore.' We must admit that, mother. Bernicia is beautiful and charming indeed."

"She falls short in every grace, if you measure her by Claire."

"There is no common measure between them, and there is no comparison. The rose is the rose, and the

lily is the lily, and the Best of Beings is the Maker of both. Would it please you, mother, to send a gift by me to the India Mission?"

"In faith, it would not, son William. It is only God can give with both hands. I know that you will do all that falls to the duty of our house, and it is better you should do it; for you are a man of consequence in the world. I am an unknown woman."

"God will not count sex with or against you. In the building of the walls of Jerusalem, not only Shalum, but Shallum's daughters helped."

"If God blesses the India Mission, it will not need my help."

"Job's last prosperity was not only of God's blessing but of his friend's charity. Every man gave him a piece of money and an earring of gold."

"I give to my own meetinghouse, and I keep a student for the ministry with the good Dr. Doddridge. England is nearer to me than the ends of the earth, son William. Blessed is the work of moderation."

"It receives only the wages and blessing of moderation. And I assure you, though India be at the ends of the earth, it is of our vitals; it is an artery of England and must be Christianized."

"William, it comes to this—you are for the India Mission by all means, I by no means. Contradictions beget one another, and I am in too naked a temper this morning to say what I do not think; or give where I do not want to give."

"Then good-morning, mother."

"Good-morning, William. Going to the Old Jewry take some prudence with you."

“And as you knit, mother, I would have you think. You may then come to a more liberal temper.”

“I may come to eat salt with my pickled herring, but it is not among the likelihoods.”

Nor was it. Madame's charities were large, but they were of a definite kind. The Lime Street Meeting gave her a rigid account of them, and the young men whose education she had been in continuance responsible for, vouched for her wisdom by assuming the bands and gown of preachers of the Word. All this new-born enthusiasm about foreign missions did not affect madame. As she continued her knitting she only said to herself: “There will be a great crowd present, and they will set one another on fire in the dark, for as to India, they know by halves and they talk by wholesale. I will put my God-pennies in a surer bag.”

In about an hour the girls returned to the parlour. Bernicia had removed her gay dress, and now wore a gown of brown sarsnet and a little tippet of Delhi mull ruffled with lace. Madame regarded the change with approval. “You look more womanly, Bernicia,” she said; “and sevenfold fairer. I wonder that Fanny encourages you in such fopperies.”

“There is no dispensing with them, grandmother. We have to dress as the world dresses. It is but good manners to ourselves, you know. Where has George gone? I have brought a most melodious song set by Mr. Carey, and I expected him to sing it with me. It runs in this fashion—very softly discoursed :

“ ‘While in a bower with beauty blest.’ ”

“Cease, Bernicia ! I have no mind for playhouse

ditties ; and I am glad George is not here to-day, either to help or to listen to you."

"Why, grandmother, you speak angrily ! One would think it was a matter of excommunication to sing a love ditty."

"It is a matter beyond discussion—so much for that !"

Then the girls sat down to their embroidery frames, and Bernicia was snubbed and a little angry. She had dressed herself for an afternoon's outing with George, and he had evidently left the house without an apology for his absence.

"George has behaved very badly," she whispered to Claire.

"He will beg you a thousand pardons, Bernicia. He will beg them so feelingly that you will be compelled to forgive him. For only the most important business could make him disappoint himself so far."

"I dare say I shall forgive him. We usually make up matters as fast as they go wrong. George is all courtesy and kindness, milk and honey, but for all that, he went away without any assurance that it desolated his life to do so ; or broke his heart, or even put him in a perilous passion."

"Because it did none of these things. A business man is obliged to attend to business."

"Business ! Such a dog-trot of a life ! I do believe he lives with a single eye to money-getting."

"You know better, Bernicia. You ought to treat George more justly. I thought you liked him."

"Yes, I am pleased with him ; I know not why, nor care wherefore. I denied myself all my airs to-day, and gave him a smile that should have made

everything in my image and likeness. Then while I change my gown, he is gone. However, it is not a two-penny matter."

"Bernicia, what have you been doing this week?" asked madame suddenly. "I trust you have not altogether wasted your time?"

"In faith, no! I have knit and sewed, and been to dances and concerts, and done my little coquetries very well. I was going to hear Mr. Whitefield preach, but the Prince of Wales gave a silver cup to be rowed for, and this carried everyone to the Thames. Then I was tired, and Tarsset put me to bed."

"So you missed Mr. Whitefield? Oh, what a pity!" ejaculated Claire.

"Yes, I fell into one of my little rages about it, and then Tarsset told me I had far better go to St. Paul's and hear morning prayers. She went on about being fair starved for a service, and was so sure that my dear mother in heaven was having a heartache for the churchless way I was living in, that I fell into a fit of crying, and so on till I dropped asleep."

"And in the morning, *what?*" asked madame, lifting her eyes from her work and looking steadily at Bernicia.

"In the morning Tarsset and I went to St. Paul's. And I heard the most heavenly music, and the prayers seemed to be a part of it, and all was so solemn and peaceful and melodious that I came away sweetly religious and happy. As for Tarsset, the tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. She said she was not a bit opinion-tied, but give her the Church of England and her prayer-book! They were her mother and her mother's milk, and she had been clear and

sheer starved for them ; and as for Mr. Whitefield, or Mr. Wesley either, she had heard things that put them both in a bad light."

"What things?" asked madame sharply.

"Well, calling everybody sinners but themselves. Tarsset says 'it isn't likely, and that neither the quality nor the common people are used to it. They don't relish such setdowns, and who would?' She always talks that way, does Tarsset, when she is heart-hot about anything," explained Bernicia, with a pretty emotion. And even madame smiled at the broad Northumberland burr, and the homely dialect into which Bernicia had naturally fallen as soon as she began to talk of Tarsset and of Tarsset's opinions.

Then the conversation drifted back to Lady Pomfret and her dresses and entertainments. Claire asked the questions, Bernicia described vividly, and madame appeared to be lost in thought and quite oblivious to the confidences of her granddaughter and Claire. But she was listening intently and making deductions, for when Bernicia remarked,

"My sister Fanny is generosity itself ; for, though I have not a sixpence, she always says *our* purse," madame said sharply :

"This must be mended, Bernicia. Fanny's purse is Lord Pomfret's purse. I cannot have you dependent upon him. Is there no income from the Cresswell estate? Your uncle must see to it. In the meantime I will make you the allowance of a gentlewoman, with some conditions. You must spend none of it at the gaming-table, nor for the theatre, nor yet for dancing-masters or astrologers. It is for your dress and for your charities, for lessons in music, and

to buy good books and such things as you know I would approve. And I would also have you make Fanny presents rich enough to release you from any sense of obligation to a man who is no relation to our family."

"Indeed, grandmother, I give you a thousand thanks! And as for your desires in the spending, I will not wrong them one half-penny."

Then madame, having encouraged a generous sentiment, found herself carried away with its tide. She said: "I heard you and Clair talking about lace. Come and I will show you a treasure of it." So, wondering and pleased, they followed madame to her room, a large apartment on the ground floor, built especially for her requirements. With a proud deliberation she led the girls to a case of drawers made of yew wood and bound with silver, and, as she slowly unlocked one after the other, she made them notice the exquisite wood, with its delicate veinings and shadings of colour. Then, from many coverings, she drew forth collars and tippets, fans and trimmings of lace, English point and bone, Flanders and Mechlin and Brussels—a little fortune in woman's handiwork.

"Why do you not wear some of these lovely things yourself, grandmother?" asked Bernicia. And Claire folded a tippet of Mechlin lace across her shoulders, the old lady smiling faintly at her finery.

"It is the wonder and beauty of rich lace that one is never too old or too young to wear it," continued Bernicia. "And as for these treasures, grandmother, I must leave off exclaiming, for I have no more 'oh's' left. But, faith, I do wish Fanny could see them. She would be taken with a fit of sickness on

your hands, grandmother. She would send for a doctor, and he would not dare to prescribe anything but lace, her brains would be so whimsied between Mechlin and Brussels."

"Then I will avoid so great an inconvenience, and send Fanny a piece of Mechlin by your hands. And as I will have no stepchildren, Claire and you may each choose a piece to match your desire."

"Now I know that you love me, grandmother!" cried Bernicia.

"Oh, child, is it thus you judge love—by gifts?"

"How else, indeed? Can one judge it by what is invisible?"

But Claire took the aged hands full of lace between her own and kissed them, and then Bernicia did likewise, and madame's eyes grew misty and soft, though she said, a little impatiently:

"Well, children, it is years since I have done anything so handsome. But what is freely given may be happily worn. So carry away your gifts. I will be alone a while."

Indeed, they saw madame no more until the dinner hour, which William Bouverie, after his removal to Bloomsbury, had been compelled to put forward to the fashionable hour of four o'clock; the distance between his house and his wharves being too great to allow him to break the day with an early dinner. So the girls had a lunch of Yorkshire pie and curds and cream, and then they wandered about the house, and finally went to Claire's room to rest and talk and dress for the evening.

For her friend, Bernicia Cresswell, Claire had one of those romantic admirations which sweet and inno-

cent natures frequently encourage for their opposites. She was attracted by Bernicia's brilliancy and bravery, and also much interested in a life so different from her own, and she had a womanly curiosity about its dressing, its love-making, and amusements—a curiosity her heart condemned and yet indulged. Almost she wished she could feel its many pleasures to be as sinless as Bernicia held them.

This afternoon they fell into a more confidential strain, and Bernicia acknowledged that Lord Rashleigh was her declared lover, "and had fretted himself pale for her favour." Perhaps she wished Claire to tell George this news as a punishment for his day's desertion; for Bernicia was usually modest about her lovers, though at this hour she was not disinclined to talk of them.

"They are more for number than account," she said, "but Lord Rashleigh is most impatient under his discomfort. He vows he cannot eat or sleep or play, and he is sometimes cross for a word of encouragement. But Fanny says truly that I know not yet my own mind, and so shall not be hurried and flurried, for if a lover be worth a wedding ring, he improves with the keeping."

"And what says Lord Rashleigh? Does he not give his impatience some expression?"

"He shows a proper spirit enough; one very suitable to his race and breeding. All men bear love-longing very ill, but a German will drink it or sleep it away, and a Frenchman will cry or talk it away. Rashleigh, being an Englishman, 'Hangs it!' and 'Damns it!' and is as selfishly impatient as a weaning baby."

"Will you marry him at the last?"

"Who can tell? Why should one marry at all in this life? Unmarried people are the fashion in heaven. Fanny says there is no necessity to be in a hurry."

"Does not Lord Pomfret urge you to be more kind to his friend?"

"Fanny will not suffer him to talk to me about Rashleigh. She tells him to take care of the affairs of the state, and leave my little love affairs to her. You must know that Lord Pomfret is always full of his dirty, quarrelsome politics. His talk is of the European nations. You should see these statesmen, Claire, throwing their dice every evening and prophesying war. They never expect anything but war, and if war, then of course victory. When the world is at peace they are unhappy, until someone begins to play the devil for them."

"Bernicia, are you not afraid to speak in that way? I can tell you that madame does not like anyone but divines to talk so familiarly of the—devil."

Claire said the last word very softly and reluctantly, and Bernicia laughed. "La, my dear!" she cried, "I generally speak very well of him. He is such an important person, one cannot talk about him as if he was not in good society. How would grandmother like to be called Mme. Bouverie?" And Bernicia mimicked Claire's abashed pronunciation with a twinkling timorous manner that annoyed her.

"I do not think it is right," she answered, "to make any comparisons between your grandmother and—and——"

"The other person. It is not. I was very wrong to do so, especially as grandmother has covered all

her shortcomings to me with such lace. Come, let us dress ourselves to the very height ! Give me a needle and some flax, Claire, and I will trim the front of my green petticoat with it, and ruffle my throat band, and my sleeves, and make myself ' Spring in a mist.' As for you, only cross that lovely tippet over your sky-blue tabinet, and you will look like an angel. Grand-mother will be delighted."

"Oh ! I think you are mistaken. Such dressing will not please her."

"Yes, it will. You may do anything, so it be with an assurance. Quick ! the needles and the flax."

"I know madame better."

"My sweet Claire, madame does not know herself. She thinks she is greedy, and she is generous. She thinks she is pious, and she is worldly. She has no idea what a delightful old lady she really is. Come, let us have a venture !"

The girl had leaped to her feet in an enthusiasm, and even as she spoke was spreading out her green petticoat and puckering the lace across its front width. Then Claire gave her the needle and thread, smiling at her impulsive hurry. She had all the native strength of character to oppose Bernicia's plans, but she did not think it an occasion for contradiction. Perhaps after all Bernicia might be right. So she fell into Bernicia's mood, watching her as the needle sped in and out, until the lovely filament hung like fairy's work over the rich brocades. And how they chattered and exclaimed, and admired, as the business of the toilet went on. Two girls never made a merrier robing, and when it was finished Bernicia was laughing with delight, as she danced up to the looking-glass.

"I am in love with myself," she cried. "I am so airy and so fairy! Do I look like a butterfly, Claire? Do I? do I? do I look like a butterfly, Claire?" she cried, in a charming crescendo.

"You are enchanting from top to toe, Bernicia. Poor George!"

"Poor George! I am amazingly sorry for him." Then she examined Claire with an air of satisfaction. "In faith, I must give you back your compliment," she said. "You look celestial, Claire. Sky-blue silk and a Brussel's tippet is ravishing. What a pity you have not a lover to see you!"

"Once I had a lover," said Claire very softly.

"*'Had!'* Ah, Clare, *'had'* is such a word as is full of tragedy. It comes from the house which astrologers call 'the end of all things.' Now you are going to tell me a story,—something strange and secret, something sad and passionate,—for nothing is a wonder in love."

"Nothing strange or secret, sad or passionate, can I tell you. 'Tis a very plain matter indeed. He was George's friend, and they were at school together. And I was at school in the same town, so whenever George called to see me, his friend came with him. That is all. He never told me that I was loved by him, but I knew it. Then his father sent him to travel, and if his love has kept through chance and change, I may have a lover yet."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"His name, Claire? Is it within my knowledge?"

"He is the son of the rich Mr. Hatton of Hatton-Hurst. His name is Oliver Augustus Hatton."

"A lordly name! I hope he fits it on every side. Is he handsome? Is he tall? Is he well bred? Is he sprightly? Can he love? Has he honour? In short, is he the most perfect character in existence? If not, he is unworthy of you."

"I have told you so much soberly."

"Soberly! How can anyone be sober in love? Do you not weep for him? Do you not long for him? Do you not write to him? When do you expect to see him again?"

"I do not weep for him, nor long for him, nor yet write to him. And he has seen so many new faces, he may have forgotten mine. I may be loved no longer."

"La, I do not think that! I heard Sister Fanny say she had never found that people loved each other less for living asunder. She was speaking of Lord and Lady Thurston, who see next to nothing of each other."

"See how we trifle, Bernicia. I am sure it is time we made our appearance. George will count every minute a loss that he sees you not."

So they went down to the parlour in a little hurry, and found that William Bouverie was already there. He was sitting with a stranger, a man who had lived in Riga for fifteen years, carrying on business there, mainly for the interest of the house of Bouverie. He looked at Claire and Bernicia as if they had suddenly descended from Jupiter, and for a few moments he could hardly continue his conversation. George was standing by the window, but he was watching the door, eager and impatient. Madame had laid aside her knitting, and was lying back in her chair with closed eyes. Her face was so old, her look so far off

and chill, that it required an effort to associate her with the passionate sense of gain, and life, and love, explaining the three men who were talking or watching beside her.

However, madame's eyes opened wide enough when she saw the two girls tricked out so bravely with the precious lace. But she found no time to express her disapprobation, for Bernicia, in a low voice, immediately began to explain how they had both dressed entirely to honour her gifts. "It was but right," she said, "that madame should see her lace worn before others had that pleasure. And was it not becoming? Neither Claire nor herself," she asserted, "would rob the Exchequer in exchange for it," etc., etc. So the only bitter thing madame could find to say was, "Bernicia Cresswell, you are so bad and so good, I know not how to treat you." And Bernicia answered, "Treat me as if I were a very angel, grandmother."

The dinner went by with a stately order. The best viands, the oldest wines, the most silent and effective service made the occasion a striking contrast to the merry glass-clinking, health-drinking, controversial, gossippy, social affairs which Lady Pomfret called "dinners." William Bouverie and his friend talked of hemp and masts, of tallow and skins, of buying at two per cent. and selling at four, and George was continually drawn into the conversation and made to observe this and that, because, as Bouverie said, "'Tis not unlikely you may go to Riga before the year be past." Then George looked at Bernicia, and Bernicia pretended to have heard nothing concerning Riga. She was asking Claire questions about a wine syllabub.

After dinner the girls retired with madame, and Bernicia remarked with an irritating little yawn : " You may see how much more important hides and tallow and hemp are than mission lectures. My Uncle Bouverie never said a word about the India Mission. The Riga business was far more personal and important."

" You are not to criticise your elders, miss," said madame. " Your uncle knows the proper time for every subject. Hemp and tallow have their hour, and higher things are not to be mixed up with them."

" I but made the remark, grandmother."

" Because you thought it witty. But whatever wit says, it is always contriving its own ruin. Take my word for that, Bernicia."

She was going then to have her say concerning the extravagance of wearing lace, instead of keeping it in prepared papers and locked drawers, when George entered, and he was followed immediately by William Bouverie. The stranger had gone, and the day's work was over. The twilight was approaching and the house was at perfect peace. Then the weary merchant looked at the young people with a happy pride and said : " Sing me my favourite anthem." And when it was accomplished he had the atmosphere which he desired. He rose and began to walk about the room, and as he walked to tell the story that lay like a golden song below all the fretful stir of the city, and the clamour of trade and travel.

" I would that you had been at the Old Jewry this day, mother," he said, addressing himself to madame. " Dr. Watts was present, and 'tis like he will never be here again, for he is near to the kingdom of heaven."

"I saw him," answered madame, "when he was young, very modest and learned, and full of love as was St. John."

"He is now old and feeble, and so weak that he leaned upon Dr. Doddridge and the Rev. William Romaine as he spoke. But oh, how rich were his words ! I was told that I should see a man with one foot in the grave, and I found a man with one foot in heaven. And we sang together two of his hymns, knowing that we should sing them no more together in this world."

"Children !" cried madame, with a singular emotion, "before Dr. Watts gave the Church these hymns, we might be Christians in our sermons, but we were mere Jews in our praises. Ten thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand holy men and women never sang the name of Jesus until they went to heaven. Nothing but the Psalms of David had been sung in our meetinghouse till I was an old woman. Then one Sabbath Dr. Doddridge gave out the hymn:

" ' Give me the wings of faith to rise,'

and we could not sing it for weeping. After that we sang hymns constantly, and though my voice was old and thin, I went around my house singing hymns from morning to night."

"Yet, grandmother," said Bernicia, with an eager air of defence, "what are hymns to the Psalms? Has anything ever happened for which you cannot sing or pray a psalm? Mother used to say their music was always ready made, and I know when I was in such great loneliness and sorrow, I never missed comfort in my prayer-book." And this girl with the light of

holy feeling upon her face was a new Bernicia to her relatives. Her uncle stepped closer to her and stroked her hair and cheek, and madame smiled, and Claire clasped her hand, and George trembled with love and joy and said to himself, "She is a very rose of Eden."

"But the missionary, son William?"

"He came in his own time, mother. Before it we had some stirring words from Dr. Chandler, reminding us of the old Nonconforming confessors, and comparing our riches and sloth with their glorious sufferings and labours and martyrdoms. And now that we sat at ease, no man making us afraid, he said it was our manifest duty to send the Gospel from the East even to the West. And at these words Schwartz leaped to his feet, and into the India Mission he plunged like a man with but one thought. And his words flew like arrows, and our hearts burned like live coals, and we were on fire with him, so that when he cried out: 'Who will go forth with the everlasting Gospel to the heathen?' many young men leaped to their feet, and you could see in their faces that they were ready to follow Schwartz from the pole to the equator."

Madame was greatly moved, for she laid down her knitting and looked steadily at her son, who continued, "The English swords have cut a path for the English Bible, mother, and shall we not send it?" Then he took the Bible in his hands, and called together his household, and read and spoke to them until the long twilight vanished, and the air of the room was like a highly strung harp, sensitive to unseen influences, and ready to snap with emotion.

It was a relief when a servant began to light the wax candles in the silver candlesticks, and the rest to move slowly away. Their exit was answered by a deep sigh from every breast, and madame rose and laid upon the Bible several large gold pieces. Then George did likewise, and Claire, putting her hand into her guardian's hand, said : "Give something for me, out of the money which is my own."

But Bernicia had nothing to offer. She looked at the gold with shining eyes, and then stooped and kissed it. "I have only my love and pity to give," she said, "for as you know, uncle, I am poor as Job. So pray, judge me not as wanting in charity."

"My dear niece, you stand accountable only to a Judge of whom you will have no reason to complain. But it is high time you were at rest, the more so as I wish to speak with you early in the morning on a matter of importance."

She wondered a little at this charge, but did not let the wonder hold her eyes open. Her fear was that her grandmother wished to make her stay longer than one day each week, and this demand she was fully resolved to oppose. "My time is well arranged, and I will not have it changed," she said, laughing at the rhyme ; "a day once in the week is not disagreeable among good people, for I like to feel I have a capacity for more lives than one,—for religion and virtue, for taste also, and the *beau-monde*,—but one day is sufficient for the proof. In the morning when I awake I will prepare my arguments."

In the morning she did not require them. The evil we qualify for is seldom the evil we have to face, and Bernicia was quite unprepared for her uncle's confi-

dence. "I had a caller last night," he said, drawing Bernicia into a chair by his side. "I had a caller whose business touched you and Lady Pomfret very closely. It was the cousin who brought you to London."

"Allan Cresswell. I thought he had gone to inquire after my brother Harry."

"He has returned. He says Harry will not make any submissions to the present government ; further, that the foolish boy intends to enter the service of France."

"I will swear it a lie ! And I can tell you the rest of his business, uncle. He thinks Cresswell may now be given to a man as loyal as he has taken care to prove himself."

"He spoke of paying you and Lady Pomfret a consideration in money for your right."

"I will accept no money for my right. If King George takes it, I cannot help the wrong, but I will not sell my birthright to Allan Cresswell. No ! I would not sell him my cast-off shoe."

"He made the offer in clear terms. He proposes to apply for the succession, and to pay you and Lady Pomfret a daughter's portion from the estate."

"The daughters' portions have always come to consideration after the heirs', and the widows', and the younger brothers' rights have been served. Tarsset has told me all about the girls of Cresswell. Their rights sound well enough, but they are small indeed, or Cousin Allan never would have broached them."

"He is poor, and he wishes me to lend him the money to prosecute his own claim, and pay your claims, and so save Cresswell in the family name."

"His claim ! When did Allan Cresswell possess a

claim on Cresswell? Lend him the money if you wish, he will never pay you it again."

At this moment George Abney entered the room, and Bernicia stood up with flashing eyes and told him how Allan Cresswell proposed to rob Lady Pomfret and herself of their birthrights.

George looked at the uncle for an explanation, which was rapidly given. "The facts are these, George. Allan Cresswell wants to be lord of Cresswell. He says he is the only loyal representative of the name. He believes the king will give him the succession, and he offers me a mortgage in advance if I will risk the gold to push his claim at court, and pay off Lady Pomfret and Bernicia."

"And there is not gold enough in London town to pay off Bernicia Cresswell!" cried the girl, with her head up and her face in a flame. "If he could buy the king and the whole court, he would still have to reckon with me. He shall never live in my father's castle, nor sit in my father's chair, nor till my father's fields. I will make Harry challenge him to a death combat—and if Harry is too poor a man to do so, I will take the matter in my own hand."

"Not so!" said George, speaking with a quiet decision; "if it comes to an issue of steel, I am at your service. Though our cousinship be distant, you are still my kindred; and I can use a sword in your cause as well as any man."

"Now, sir, I know we are of the same race and blood!" and she lifted her lovely face with such a shining generous gratitude, that George, had he dared his privilege, might at that moment have kissed her without offence.

Bernicia's uncle witnessed this pledge of sympathy with some impatience.

"Come, come, Bernicia!" he said, "take some reason with your rights. My wish is to secure justice for the children of my sister Frances. This before all else. But you must see as plain as I do, that this is a matter for cool, deliberate calculation; and that your pretty heroics will count for nothing in the verdict. Let us be considerate of our available resources. What, for instance, can Lord Pomfret do?"

"Whatever my sister Fanny tells him to do."

"He is in favour with the king, and all his political hopes hang on the House of Hanover. How, then, will he dare to advocate lenity toward so notorious a Jacobite as your brother Harry?"

"He will do what Fanny tells him to do, though it were to disobey king, lords, and commons."

"*Tush!* A man does what he wants to do."

"With exceptions; many and various."

"Have you any powerful friends?"

"Lord Rashleigh is of the queen's circle. And Fanny is a favourite with Her Majesty, besides which it will go hard with me if I win not friends for my own cause, and enemies for Allan Cresswell's. Let him explain where *he* has been, and on what business. He also is a Cresswell, and therefore a fit object for suspicion. He says this and that about Harry; I will swear that he has just as likely been with Charles Stuart as with Harry Cresswell. Oh, you may trust me to make his character bleed on every side!"

"But you must not prejudice the truth, Bernicia."

"In faith, uncle, there are times when truth may be as unseasonable as sense. I shall only need to bid

Tarset find out where the creature has been. And wherever he has been straying, I will warrant sticks enough can be gathered to make a fire for his sacrifice."

"This is all nothing but peradventure. The case between him and me will come to pounds sterling. Shall I make terms with him?"

"Listen not to him. Put him off with that convenient word, *anon*, *anon*. Do but keep him without money, and you tie his hands, and make his promises babble, and so bring him to discredit. I have seen so much since I came to London, I assure you, uncle. *Allan Cresswell!*"

She ceased speaking at the name, but the calm, scornful dropping of the eyelids, expressed a sovereign contempt beyond the reach of syllables.

She found Fanny in a proper mood to echo all her indignation.

"You have kept me waiting a whole hour, miss!" she cried. "Have you been to meeting? Goodness! Gracious! Where did you get that lace?"

"Grandmother gave it to me. She also sent you some."

"Pray let me have it."

"Mechlin, pure Mechlin, Fanny."

"As I live, Mechlin! Well, Bernicia, this adorable lace is the only event that has gone to please me since you went away. I will swear some retrograde planet is hanging over us. Everything is upside down."

"And what think you? Allan Cresswell says Harry will not make submission."

"'Tis like enough. Harry is made of iron."

"That he is going to offer his sword to the King of France."

"That is a lie!"

"And Cousin Allan is making suit for the succession to Cresswell."

"*What?*"

"And propositions through Uncle Bouverie to buy our rights."

"Lord, what a villain! What a tenfold villain! Why does not Harry come back? Men are such very cowards. Yes, they are. I would like to tell Harry what I think of him. Now, what is to be done? I wish Lord John were here, though, to be sure, he would only bite his lip and say 'Egad, Fanny!'"

"Will he help us?"

"Will—he—help—us? Pray what else will he do? Why did not my heart bode me this misfortune? Why had I no dream, nor any sign whatever? I am all unprepared."

"And here comes my Lady Townley, with her fan spread and her ribbons flying, and all her usual airs and lassitudes."

"Then help me, Bernicia, for I must keep my tongue from temper. I must even flatter her from her top-feather to her shoe-buckle, for she is now of the queen's bed-chamber and may be of use to us."

CHAPTER III.

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS OF LOVING.

THE visit of Lady Townley was more full of interest than she intended. "I have but a moment on my way to the Ranelagh Garden," she exclaimed, "where there is a masquerade in the Venetian manner. Are you not going?"

"We may make the visit in the evening, Sabrina. I hear that we shall have fireworks."

"Yes, and the loges are turned into little shops for the sale of refreshments and lemonade. There will be excellent music, and as for the dancing, we shall make it ourselves. Am I not dressed for a revel?"

"Indeed," answered Lady Pomfret, "your dress is vastly becoming. Is there anything new happening? I hear no talk except of politics and play. Lord Pomfret, as you know, is very much averse to gossip. And pray, my dear, how do you now manage to pass the time, for I hear you have sent your daughter to school?"

"There was good occasion, I assure you. She was learning the tricks of the girls of this wicked age; pert little hoydens, all of them, flirting their fans and ogling the men. As for passing the time, I do not find it difficult. I lie in bed till noon, I dress and dine, and read the new romances; I play cards or go to the theatre until midnight. Besides, I have my page, and my lapdog, and my monkey."

Ere Lady Pomfret could answer, Jackanapes entered. He was dressed in scarlet, and he carried a letter on a lacquered tray. So for a few minutes Bernicia talked to their visitor of the lotteries and of Mr. Keaton's dancing classes, for Lady Pomfret, with a polite "by your permission," was giving her attention to the unexpected missive.

"It is only a summons from the Countess Selina," she said, with a scornful smile, as she laid the paper down. "She thinks I may find it to my eternal welfare to hear Mr. Whitefield preach, and so she asks me to her house in Park Street next Sunday night."

"If you would be in the fashion, you must go, Fanny. Nothing is so much the rage at present as Methodism. I confess that I feel an interest in Mr. Whitefield. It is so charming to hear him tell such high sinners as the Duchess of Buckingham how vile they are. To be sure the duchess was very angry, and after the last lecture she assured the Countess Huntington that Mr. Whitefield's doctrines were highly repulsive, and strongly tinged with impertinence toward his superiors."

"And what do you think, Sabrina?"

"I think with the duchess, that it is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl upon the earth."

"And does Mr. Whitefield say things that are so highly insulting and offensive?"

"I assure you that I have heard him. Indeed, his sentiments are utterly at variance with high rank and good breeding. No person of fashion can relish them, and it is quite true that the Countess of Suffolk flew into a passion with Lady Huntington after one

of Mr. Whitefield's sermons, which she averred was preached at her. There was no quieting the storm. Lady Betty Germain tried to explain, and Mrs. Ancaster tried to persuade, but the Beauty was offended beyond all reasoning with, and so left the house in a fury. It was very entertaining, you may believe me."

"And I hear that my friend Lady Chesterfield also leans to the Methodists."

"La, my dear! The great Chesterfield is one of the elect ladies! She is always ready to 'show out,' even at the court. 'Tis said both the king and the queen are half-won over by her."

"O-h-h!" cried Lady Pomfret, with a mirthful peal. "Oh-h-h! you make me tipsy with laughing, Sabrina. That would be delectable! We have had a Dutch Calvinistic king, and we have had a German Lutheran king, and shall we indeed have a Methodist one? That is past believing."

"If you like not my words, dust them away," answered Lady Townley a trifle haughtily; "but I can tell you, the whole palace is ringing about the Chesterfield and Mrs. Greenfield, who are, as the elect say, 'much owned' at court. They give themselves a parcel of airs too, and their self-complacency is unbottomed."

"Indeed, sister," said Bernicia, "I am all curiosity and impatience. Shall we not go to Lady Huntington's on Sunday night?"

"If Lord Pomfret is willing, Bernicia."

Then Lady Townley gave her friend back her own incredulous exclamation:

"You make me tipsy with laughing, Fanny. *If Lord Pomfret is willing!* All the world knows that

if reasons were rained down from heaven upon Lord Pomfret, not one of them would fit him, unless you told him it ought to do so. 'Tis faith, Fanny."

"'Tis fiddlesticks, Sabrina."

"Well, my dear creature, I have prattled away my time to a degree, so thank your stars, I am going. I shall see at least fifty of our acquaintances at Ranelagh."

"I cry your mercy, then. Will you rail at me through the whole fifty?"

"Do not suspect me, Fanny. I shall say no ill of you behind your back, unless you turn Methodist."

The sisters looked at each other and smiled. The exception seemed so improbable they did not even allude to it, but immediately began to discuss the subject of Cresswell and of Harry's succession to it. For suddenly the fine old castle had appealed to both hearts in its aspect of home. They reminded themselves that Harry was now of age, and really Sir Harry Cresswell.

"And he ought to come back to England at once," said Fanny, "and we ought to make it possible for him to do so. The time is very favourable for our purpose."

Lady Pomfret was quite correct in this estimate of the opportunity, although her judgment was the result of intuition, rather than of reason. For the dreadful cruelties of Cumberland in Scotland, and the piteous deaths of Lords Kilmarnock, Balmerino, and Lovat in London, had more than satisfied the nation's conception of political justice. The king himself was conscious that the slightest further strain might cause a decided reaction of feeling, and he was far too shrewd a monarch to wish to try conclusions for his

crown a second time. It was therefore not unlikely that a signal opportunity for showing clemency would be favourably considered.

These things Lady Pomfret felt, just as she felt the atmospheric conditions prefiguring a fine or a wet day ; and she accepted them with the same unreasoning conviction of their accuracy.

"Harry must be induced to return home at once," she said positively, "and I think I will ask Lord Rashleigh to go to France and talk to him. Rashleigh is dead in love with you, Bernicia. Throw your glove into France and send him for it."

"It is not my pleasure to give Lord Rashleigh so much claim on my gratitude. If he redeemed my glove with Harry, he might claim the hand that threw it."

"Well, Bernicia?"

"I am not in a humour to give so much."

"Then Lord John must find a messenger. And that is hard on Lord John, for if his interference be discovered, he will have questions put that I shall hardly find him wit to answer. But one thing is certain, we must go to Lady Huntington's on Sunday night. Much of what we have heard may be false, but this or that, there will remain enough of likelihood in the Countess of Chesterfield's Methodism to bespeak our attention. For I can tell you, the countess is very omnipotent with the Hanover people. Will you ride with me?"

"Where will you ride?"

"First to Jermyn Street to shop a little, and 'tis not impossible that I may find myself at Ranelagh."

"I will be excused, Fanny. My brain is as dizzy as an hour-tossed shuttlecock. I will send for Tar-

set, and let her make a baby of me. If we could get Tarsset to go for Harry."

"If we could get a fiddlestick to go for Harry! And if you would only go to sleep and dream a dream, Bernicia, that indeed might help us to sort affairs a little, for at the present we are all ups and downs in the matter."

So Bernicia sent for Tarsset and let her take off her finery, and comb out her long hair, and feed her with sops in wine. And gradually the girl opened her heart to her old friend, and found that Tarsset was not only much interested, but also capable of making a practical suggestion.

"Send your cousin George Abney for Sir Harry," she said. "I will warrant him canny enough to find business to cover his journey. Up and tell him what you want, for he thinks much of you. What hinders you from asking him?"

"Nothing, Tarsset, but the time and place to see him."

"Here is your gold-edged note paper. Write him a letter. I will see that he gets it. Tell him that we are going to morning prayers at St. Paul's to-morrow,—God knows we need them,—and your cousin can meet us as we come out of church. It won't put him about at all. Why should it?"

"I will do as you advise, Tarsset."

So Bernicia wrote in the small pointed hand then considered feminine :

DEAR COUSIN :

I am going to morning prayers at St. Paul's Church to-morrow, and I have a favour to ask of you. Shall I see you as I come out of the church?

Your true cousin,

BERNICIA CRESSWELL.

When Bernicia was dressed for the evening, Tarsset took charge of the note. She felt sure that George Abney would leave his home after the dinner-hour for one of the clubs or coffee houses, and she was not disappointed. Lingerin near the entrance to Bloomsbury Square, she saw him leisurely coming down the steps of the Bouverie mansion, and she walked forward to meet him. His head was so high, and his mind so preoccupied, that he would have passed the woman, had not her courtesy and her 'Honoured Sir' arrested his attention. Then he looked at Tarsset gravely and inquiringly, with that dim kind of remembrance his transient knowledge of her accounted for.

But when she offered him Bernicia's message, and said "From my mistress, Miss Cresswell, sir," his whole air and attitude changed. He touched his hat to the note, as Tarsset delivered it, and then taking pains to avoid injuring the seal, he opened the letter with a lingering tenderness of manner, and read the few lines it contained. His handsome face brightened into more living beauty, and in spite of his powerful will, the paper fluttered in his hands as he said, with a forced indifference :

"Return with me. In a few minutes I will give you an answer for your mistress."

The answer was on Bernicia's dressing-table when she came home from the theatre, but Tarsset being weary with her walk was fast asleep. Bernicia touched her impatiently and said :

"'Tis easy seen you take but little thought for our trouble, Tarsset."

"Missie, I am old and you are young. I have

walked, and you have been carried in your chair. I have been alone, and you——”

“I wish I had been alone. On the contrary, I have had the most odious company, and yet have been compelled to smile and say I found it all vastly entertaining. Oh, the essenced fops ! Oh, the simpering young gallants ! Oh, the fools whose brains no hellebore can cure ! 'Tis a miracle how I have endured them. And they were not even sensible of my ridicule. 'Tis a vile world ! 'Tis a very vile world ! Thank the moon we are mostly all so crazy that we do not know we have lost our senses.”

“Well, miss, if I wanted a bad opinion of folk I would set a young girl to give it. Forty years ago I too used to say, Lord, this person is so bad ; and that one is so bad ; and the other one is worse ! But I have found out that we are all pretty much of a muchness ; and so I——”

“Don't cut me short in that way, Tarset. Did you take my letter ? And pray if you did, how was it received ? ”

“The answer is on your table, miss.”

Then Bernicia walked to the dressing-table, laid down her fan, and lifted George's letter. With a haste that was a remarkable contrast to her cousin's charming carefulness, she tore open the sealed paper, and holding it off with both hands, she read aloud these words :

“MY BELOVED COUSIN :

“Listen to that, Tarset. I called him 'dear,' and he answers 'dear' with 'My beloved.'

"I am transported with the honour of your note, nor can I by any words convince you of my sincere impatience to answer your request. But without fail I shall be at your service to-morrow.

"Your devoted cousin,

"GEORGE ABNEY."

She read the signature in a mocking, grandiloquent manner, with her head thrown backward, and her foot forward. 'Devoted cousin!' See how he improves upon my adjective, Tarsset. Oh, yes! give a lover an inch, and he takes a couple of yards on the instant. My beloved cousin indeed! Grant me patience to digest such words."

"Is he not your lover, miss?"

"Lord! what is a lover, Tarsset? Tell me. As I heard last week in the play, one makes them as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases, and then, if one pleases, one makes more. Unbuckle my shoes, Tarsset. I am in a pettish kind of a temper, and I wish to go to sleep. As for lovers, I do not care for any mother's son of them—not a rush candle."

Then she glanced at her prayer-book, which Tarsset had laid open at the proper collect, but she did not say it. She was very tired and her thoughts were not heavenward, and she resolved to pay up all spiritual arrears in the morning at St. Paul's Cathedral—"which is the proper place," she thought.

It was a royal day even in the city streets. Spring was in the air and in the people's hearts, and the ride to St. Paul's through the pleasant tumult was a cheerful thing. Bernicia was laughing and chatting gaily as they reached the church. Then Tarsset's sudden quiet affected her, and the chill of the great vestibule,

and the solemn gloom and stillness of the temple, and the low strains of the organ, all went to her impressive heart.

Friday's morning service was a favourite one, and there were many present ; some, alas ! only to flirt and ogle or to see their friends, and gossip afterward in the pleasant yard. But Tarsset, at least, was in dead earnest. She led Bernicia to a chair, and then knelt down beside her with an unmistakable and joyful adoration. And Bernicia, who was the most sensitive and radiating of mortals, was quickly responsive to her surroundings ; the more so, as the vast spaces were instantly filled with the murmur of many voices uttering in unison the noblest of all confessions and implorations :

“ We have erred and strayed like lost sheep,
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own
 hearts,
We have offended against Thy holy laws,
We have left undone those things which we ought to have
 done,
And we have done those things which we ought not to have
 done,
And there is no health in us.
But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders ;
Spare Thou those, O God, who confess their faults ;
Restore Thou those who are penitent,
According to Thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ
 Jesus our Lord.”

Here the easily wearied spiritual effort flagged, and she was only sensible that her thoughts wandered, and were recalled, and wandered again, until in that human movement of rising numbers she was lifted to her feet and her soul carried heavenward on the glorious wings

of the *Venite exultemus Domino*. And as the joyful melody rose higher and higher into the stupendous dome, she said rapturously to herself : " It is like the singing of angels ! I wish that I could always be religious, for it is a great happiness."

But the spiritual emotions, so deep and real in Tarsset's case, were but as the ripple of wind on restless water in Bernicia's ; and she was ready to be weary when the morning service was over. So that she felt it a relief to see the stately figure of George Abney standing motionless at the entrance of the cathedral, for it brought her in contact again with the material outside world which she loved. As her eyes fell upon him, he turned with an eager look toward her, for he was evidently in a mood of great, though well controlled, excitement, and he spoke with some decision.

" I see, cousin, that you have a coach. Let us drive to St. James's Park : there we can walk under the trees, and you can command my service as you desire."

And Bernicia was quite in the humour for anything unusual. She permitted George to carry out his desire, and only chatted to him as they drove through the busy thoroughfare of the sights they met on the way.

People of all kinds and conditions pressed close, and all the undistinguishable noise born of human struggle was in their ears, but Bernicia was in that kind of passive elation which regards nothing as very definite ; while George was certainly unconscious of any personality, or of any reality, but the sweet woman sitting at his side. The carriage, with its four black Barbary horses, and its outriders, went creeping or struggling or racing down the Strand and the Mall, but no sense

of either motion or obstruction marred George's satisfaction. He felt himself carried along as in a delicious dream. He was in Paradise, and his Eve was a woman whose like had never been on this earth before.

In the Park they left the vehicle and together went slowly through the deep green grass, and without premeditation or inquiry Bernicia began to explain the position of her brother, and their hopes and fears concerning him and the Cresswell estate. She did this fluently and with much feeling; her beautiful lips pouted and quivered, her breast panted, and her eyes filled with tears as she told the story of Allan Cresswell's treachery, and spoke of the brother who had been her companion, and who was now the last of a famous family.

And for George Abney it was such a wonderful joy to be thus walking with her, to hear her words,—all of them for him alone,—to see her lovely face paling and reddening, her rosy lips parting and closing with emotion, her eyes lifted to his eyes, that he did not wish to speak; neither did he wish Bernicia to cease speaking. At last she seemed conscious of this condition, she was silent a moment, and then said:

"I have told you enough, cousin, if you comprehend, and if you do not comprehend, then I have told you too much."

"What you wish is plain to me. I am to go to France. I am to explain to your brother Harry all that you have explained to me. In short, cousin, you rely on me to induce Harry to return to his country, and make submission for his life and estate to the king. I am most willingly your servant in this matter.

The French packet leaves on Tuesday next. I will sail in her."

"My dear cousin!" and with the words Bernicia gave him her hand.

He retained it in a firm clasp, answering: "Will you not say, my dear George?"

"La, cousin! the word is insignificant. Both mean the same person."

"Then oblige me. To hear my name from your lips! Oh, Bernicia, I ask no greater joy."

"Faith! I know better. When I have made you so happy you will want something more; you will indeed, dear George."

He stood still to listen, apprehending by some fine soul instinct the delicious syllable, and Bernicia said the word most charmingly, dropping her voice and lifting her eyes, and suffering her hand to lie within her cousin's hand. But it was but a momentary complaisance. Her next movement was to withdraw it, and as she took a step onward to say:

"I am disappointed. You have made me pay for your kindness. 'Tis a very merchant-like bargain."

"There is no bargaining in true love, Bernicia, and you know well that I have loved you since the moment I first saw you."

"La, sir! I am no diviner. And the thing was never prophesied to me. Nor have you until this moment said the word 'love' in my hearing."

"Because the word 'love' is too small. I want a new word coined to express my adoration. Find me one that will mean death to all other pleasures, that will mean delight to the pitch of paining. Oh, Bernicia! you may freely take whatever service I can

render you, for I have already given you my whole heart."

"Alas, George! I have more than I can do to take care of my own heart. What nonsense then to charge myself with yours."

"Exchange with me?"

"For value received! Can you not get beyond such a business standard, cousin?"

"You are ever on the watch to trip me in my words. Bernicia, be more pitiful. Have you never been in love!"

"Never! I thank my stars for not ruling me in such a house of folly. What is love like? How does it feel? When is one liable to an attack? At the full o' the moon? or at the change?"

"To be in love, Bernicia, is to be possessed. My love for you is my life. I draw not a breath without it. It beats with my heart. It thinks with my brain. It works with my hands. If you smile, I am in the sunshine. If you are indifferent, every source of my being is in a frost. Bernicia! Bernicia! I love you so, I love you so entirely, that I know not if I live or die but as your favour leads me."

"Truly, George, your talents lie in making what you speak to be felt."

"Can I hope so much? Will you indeed give me a little love? Just a little to hope upon?"

"No, indeed, sir! 'Twould be like giving a mortgage on my heart. But if it please all gracious powers, I will keep myself free from such observations."

However, she made this denial with a smiling grace that no young man burning toward the meridian of his affection could accept. Perhaps, indeed, she only

made it for the pleasure of having George woo her again, with still more impetuosity and fervour. For though her proud little heart melted like wax in the heat of her lover's pleading, she did not seem to dislike the ardours she was tempting and daring with such bewitching advances and retreats.

As they turned toward the carriage they met Tarsset coming toward them. She looked displeased, and said crossly: "You take advantage, Miss Bernicia. You said 'a few yards and a few minutes on the grass.' Miss Forester and a couple of beaux have just passed, and they looked your way and laughed, and no doubt said this and that and more to it. You shouldn't do so."

"I like to do so, Tarsset."

"And I think, Mr. Abney, you had better let Miss Cresswell say 'Good-morning' now. She will be set-to for an answer when Lady Pomfret asks her a few questions."

Bernicia laughed, with a pretty toss of her head, as she answered: "Do not worry, Tarsset. I can find plenty of stepping-stones in every stream that crosses my path. Now, good-morning, sir," she said, with a courtesy, as she turned again to George.

"But, Bernicia, we have not yet arranged for the future. When shall I see you? Where? We cannot part until we——"

"Have a little forbearance, sir. I will send you a word."

"But before Tuesday—I mean before Sunday."

"It is now Friday."

"To-morrow, Bernicia. Say to-morrow."

"Let me see," and Bernicia began to count upon

her fingers her many engagements, smiling all the time with a ravishing coquetry, and keeping George's eyes fixed on her by the witchery of her own. "Let me see : there is Lady Russell's dance to-night, and the Verskovi's auction in the morning, and in the evening Fanny has a dinner and a card party."

"Miss Bernicia," cried Tarsset, "you must say good-by at once and be done with it."

Thus the lovers gained nothing by a delay beyond the ripe moment of parting ; for in love, as in all other good things, what is over loses its glory or its savour. They said "Farewell" in a hurry, with a feeling of something incomplete, and with common-places instead of those few perfect monosyllables which are so sweetly illustrated by the hands and the eyes.

However, Bernicia kept George in sight for some time, and his well-sustained gravity and lack of all haste, amid the hurrying, clamorous throng, gave him great distinction. She thought he would be sure to turn frequently and look back toward her, but after his adieu he never cast one glance behind. This was an unusual attitude for a lover, and she was much impressed by it.

It was a silent and irresponsive ride home, for Bernicia was thinking of her sister Fanny, and with some trepidation. Up to this hour she had pleased herself with the idea of Fanny's astonishment and satisfaction. But when she thought of the confession of her success still to be made, doubts and fears invaded her breast. "Fanny will say I ought to have consulted her before taking the advice of a servant who knows nothing of London life. And perhaps I ought," was her

private comment on this supposition. "She will say, too, that I have been selfish in not giving her an opportunity to help in any plan for Harry's relief. And I should not wonder if I have. I did not intend to be so, but then thoughtless selfishness is a pretty bad variety of that kind of meanness. And when all else is said, she will assure me I have behaved unfashionably, or perhaps even unwomanly, and give me in anticipation all the ill-natured things likely to be said. It is not my fault, anyhow. George ought to have considered these things, or Tarsset, or somebody. Perhaps I ought to have considered them myself, and I am sure if I had thought one minute and a half on the subject, the second minute would have been fatal to the whole plan. But the thing is done, and if Fanny says too much, I am not without a tongue. Faith! I can take up the racket and return the ball to her."

She had come to this conclusion as the carriage entered the wide gates of the Pomfret mansion, and she went into her sister's presence with a little affectation of childish delight.

"Oh, Fanny!" she cried, "I have had the sweetest time in church and the loveliest drive in the Park you can imagine."

"I should hope so, miss, for you have kept me waiting upon you. I am more angry with you than I can say, for you knew well I had an engagement with Lady Waltham."

"I am sorry enough, sister."

"And pray who was with you in the Park? For I will wager ten crowns you had company in the loveliest of drives. Oh, miss! I am not to be fooled, I assure you. Was it Lord Rashleigh?"

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"Ask me to-morrow, Fanny. You are not in a humour to listen to anything patiently at this hour."

"What a saucy chit you are grown! Tell me plainly who was in your company."

"Tarsset."

"*Tarsset!*"

"And Cousin George Abney."

"*Cousin George Abney!* Pray why so much cousinship? I do not think he has a drop of claim to it."

"Indeed, you will have to put up with the 'cousinship,' Fanny. His father married a cousin of our grandmother. It is a clear case. And I can assure you Uncle William is uncle to both George and Claire—more truly uncle than he is to either you or me."

"Where did you meet the man? You told me you were going to St. Paul's for the morning service."

"And I say truly that I met Cousin George as I came out of St. Paul's. He said to me: 'You have a coach, I see. Let us take a drive in St. James's Park.'"

"A vulgar tradesman in a cloth suit! And in my coach!"

"Oh, the nobility have their vulgarity, too, I assure you! Gold lace and velvet are nothing. I have seen asses in embroidered trappings. And as for your coach, I cry your pardon for using it at all. I am no better than my ancestors, and my mother was a Bouverie, the daughter of a vulgar tradesman."

"Such ideas! I wonder how you came by them."

"Some I was born with; I have picked up others here and there and everywhere, as I went along."

"I would like to know what George Abney was

doing at St. Paul's. Fetter Lane Meetinghouse would have been more in his way."

"Ask him what he was doing. I'll warrant he will tell you."

"Bernicia, you have treated me very badly this morning."

"As I said before, I am sorry enough. Lay it to my years. A fine spring morning, a fine coach and four horses, a handsome young man, and your woman at hand to play propriety for you, in what country does the girl live, Fanny, who could have said 'No'?"

"I will talk to you later. You have cut short my time at the present. Good-morning!"

"It was a very good morning, Fanny, until you spoiled it."

But when Fanny left the room Bernicia laughed softly. "I had the last word," she thought, "and now I will go to myself and consider things. 'Tis a mercy I have the opportunity to do so."

And the end of this consideration was not favourable to confidence.

"I have thought things out, Tarsset," she said, "and I will not tell my sister a word about George and Harry. She will have so much to say and to fear that I shall be worried to death. We can keep our own secret, I suppose."

"But if it comes to harvest, you must confess, miss."

"Faith, I have a plan to throw the confession upon George Abney. He is going to do the real business, and it is only fair he should himself bring the news of his meddling. He will not mind it a bit."

"I should think he would."

“No. He is my very humble servant. I shall write and bid him come here to-morrow at three o'clock. He must tell Fanny he is going into France, and that he will be delighted to carry any message or favour she may wish to send to Harry. I myself want to see George Abney again, and I can think of no better plan.”

So the letter was written and delivered, and the next day at three o'clock George Abney was admitted to Lady Pomfret's drawing-room. Not without purpose had Bernicia selected this hour. She knew her sister would be busy with her toilet. It was past time for the intrusion of morning callers, and it was too early for those who were engaged for the evening. She felt sure, therefore, that she would have her lover's company without interruption.

George had not obeyed her wishes, however, without some scruples. The nature of the man was to hate deception of any kind, and therefore he urged upon Bernicia the propriety of taking Lady Pomfret into their consultation. “There is no cause why I should make your brother an aside interest when he is really the prime motive of my journey, Bernicia,” he said.

“Indeed, sir, there is,” she answered. “Fanny would not pardon me if she knew that I wrote you a letter ; that I sent you on a journey ; that, in short, I took from you the service of an acknowledged lover. Fanny is resolved that I shall marry Lord Rashleigh, and so is my clever brother-in-law. Do you not see, then, sir, how hemmed in to secrecy I am. And, faith, I begin to think you are very insensible to the honour I am doing you.”

Then George accepted the situation. For there is a strange bias in the ethics of lovers; a smile can throw very important questions out of all just perspective, and a kiss can make things that are as if they were not. George at this hour saw events entirely through Bernicia's eyes, and he continued to do so until Lady Pomfret entered the room. The swing and swish of her silk robe, the patter of her heeled shoes, and the sound of her voice prattling to her lap-dog advised them of her approach in sufficient time to preserve the attitude of their supposed acquaintance with each other.

But Fanny was at first a little haughty. George had caused her to be delayed, to quarrel with her sister, to generally get her engagements into sixes and sevens on the previous day, and she had no pleasant remembrances of the young man to balance this feeling. Indeed, she knew so little of him that she was not entirely sure of his identity until Bernicia made him formally known to her. Then the tide of her liking began to turn at once. She recollected that she had called him a "vulgar tradesman," and she smiled to herself at the misnomer. No finer gentleman had ever bowed to her. And he had the wit to open the conversation at once with the subject that was so near and so interesting to her.

"I ask your pardon, cousin, for my intrusion," he said. "I hope, however, my reason may prove a sufficient excuse. I am going into France, where I hear Sir Harry Cresswell now is, and it will be much to my pleasure if I can be your servant in anything relating to his welfare, or, indeed, for lace, perfumes, fans, or any trifle you yourself may desire."

The giving of his title to the exiled nobleman opened Fanny's heart wide to the sensible young man. She sat down by his side, and with rapid, feeling eloquence gave him directions for influencing her brother. "Indeed, Cousin George," she said in conclusion, "you are a very godsend, and if you have the luck to bring our exile home, I shall feel myself forever bound to you." With that she begged him to remain and eat dinner with them, and be introduced to Lord Pomfret, but George was far too prudent to push a new advantage to extremity.

"Then Bernicia shall play you a setting of Arnes," she said. "Sure you must know it, for 'tis one of Shakspeare's songs, a dainty morsel truly. Ah, here it is! Come, sir, I have been told that you have a voice far beyond the common."

Then she drew Bernicia to the harpsichord, and spread out before her the deliciously tinkling, airy, fairy music of "Where the Bee Sucks."

Now, music had no charms for Fanny Pomfret, she did not care for it in any kind, and when she heard George's and Bernicia's voices blending in the inter-chaining melody, she lifted her Blenheim spaniel, Mustache, and began to tell him, in Mother Goose fashion, how one little paw went to market and the other little paw stayed at home, etc. And she was quite as much interested in giving her dog this information as George and Bernicia were in setting each other love riddles with their eyes, so that no one perceived the advent of Lord Pomfret and his friend, Lord Rashleigh, until they stood within the door. Lord Pomfret looked curious and pleased; Rashleigh—who had caught George's love-lit face and Bernicia's

consenting voice and attitude—looked as a man looks when he meets his rival and knows it, and feels that it would be a delight to come to immediate issue with him.

There was an instant apprehension of the intrusion. The music ceased in the middle of a crescendo, and Lady Pomfret rose with a pretty cry of welcome. She looked amazingly charming as she advanced, clasping Mustache in her left arm, and holding out her right hand to her husband.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, “I have a delightful surprise for you, my dear lord. Here has come my cousin, George Abney, of whom you have heard so much. Is he like me? Is he like Bernicia? I do really think his eyes resemble those of my dear mother. *That* you must observe.”

Of course Lord Pomfret observed it, or he said so, which answered the same purpose. And with this evident claim to his favour he pressed, though unavailingly, his hospitality upon his relative. Yet it was an interesting family picture, the handsome young citizen smiling at Bernicia, who leaned upon her sister, and lifted her eyes to Lord Pomfret that he might compare them with the eyes of her cousin, George Abney—a picture, however, which filled Lord Rashleigh with hatred and anger.

“I hope in my soul,” he muttered, “Lady Pomfret will not introduce the fellow to me.” And when she did so, he was as rude as he had resolved to be. Sensitive as a woman, George felt this antagonism, but he bowed slightly with the air of one who submits to an insult for the sake of others, and Rashleigh turned on his heel. This incipient challenge was of

such rapid passage as hardly to be noticeable, yet everyone felt its influence, and were glad when the door was closed between the two young men.

"Did you see the meeting, John? did you see it?" Lady Pomfret asked her husband when the evening was over, and Rashleigh had gone away in a thunderous temper, having lost a large sum of money at play through his own carelessness. "Such hatred! Such defiance! Did you see it, John?"

"I saw that they were instantly jealous of each other. But your cousin, George Abney, is a Dissenter, and he will have 'principles' about duels. I do not think they will fight."

"I tell you, they met like dogs on the street. They may not fight, but they are both ready to do so."

And Lady Pomfret laughed and ran into her sister's bedroom to have her laugh out. "Let me congratulate you, Bernicia!" she cried. "Lord John thinks there will be a duel about you. *That* will set your fame flying. *That* will make the men run mad for you! Tell me, are you smitten with our cousin's beauty? Beyond cavil, he is as handsome as Apollo. Do you love him? And if so, pray how do you love him? A little? or a great deal? or beyond everything?"

And Bernicia answered with a sleepy smile, "I have not yet asked myself, Fanny—there are so many ways of loving."

CHAPTER IV.

A DRAWING-ROOM SERMON.

WHAT is happiness? Generally speaking, it is gratified self-love. So Bernicia was not happy, for her self-love had been deeply wounded, and that by a person of whom Lady Pomfret would not permit her to speak. She therefore looked forward to Wednesday, anticipating some confidence and discussion with her relatives in Bloomsbury Square. But when Wednesday arrived she was inert, gloomy, and decidedly cross. It was mid-afternoon when she reached the Bouverie mansion, and madame was taking her usual rest.

But Claire met her on the threshold with more than ordinary delight; her face was beaming, she was prettily dressed, and her voice had that vibrancy which is only imparted by real pleasure. Bernicia allowed herself to fall to a still lower pitch in the presence of such visible content, and without any conscious feeling of the kind, she was offended by this want of sympathy with her own condition. She submitted, however, to Claire's mood, and walked silently upstairs at her side, listening to words of welcome and to affectionate platitudes.

"I have been watching for you all morning, Bernicia," she said. "I never was so anxious to see you, and you never were so late in coming. Are you sick, dear cousin?"

"Indeed I am neither well nor sick. I have a megrim, a dolor, a feeling as if life had cold-shouldered me. Routs, balls, and plays are become a very weariness. I wish we could have a storm. I wither in this everyday, everyday sunshine!"

"I thought you loved the sunshine, Bernicia?"

"I do, over the hills and moors. But in these glaring noisy streets it is a very melancholy thing, I assure you."

"You are not like yourself- to-day, Bernicia. George went away so happy I thought surely you had given him reason for his happiness. And I do think a love affair with George must be a paradise on earth."

"I know not. I have a discontent with all things."

"And you have so much to make you glad! Do not be ungrateful. God loves a grateful heart, Bernicia."

"I have reason to believe that my heart is altogether sinful and disagreeable to him."

Claire looked at her wonderingly. Never before had she seen her cousin so gloomy and troubled. She had thrown herself upon the bed, and a sombre inertia seemed to invade her instantly. For a few minutes Claire said not a word. She sat down by Bernicia's side, and a tender soul instinct taught her to avoid anything like mockery or laughter; yet as soon as silence became strained and painful she asked gently.

"Who has been troubling your heart, Bernicia?"

"That man George Whitefield. I wish that I had never seen him. It was very unkind of Fanny to take me near him."

"Then you were at Lady Huntington's on Sabbath night?"

"Fanny persuaded me to go there. But I assure you, I shall go no more to my Lady Huntington's spiritual routs."

"What said Mr. Whitefield?"

"The most impolite things imaginable. I wonder not at Lady Suffolk's impatience and offence. He spoke of my heart as sinful and vain and foolish, with much more to the same purport."

"He meant not you in particular."

"Faith, I think he did! He looked at me, and his words went through me like a sword. Those weary of lovers and races and plays may like this sensation for a change, but I will have no more of it."

"Indeed, I think that those who listen to Mr. Whitefield are more in sincerity than desirous of a mere change."

"You will see. Lady Huntington will die, and then Mr. Whitefield will go out of fashion; and the elect ladies will return to the common wicked world, and will love dress, and play basset, and go to Ranelagh and the Rotunda again."

"I thought you would like Mr. Whitefield. I am sorry you do not. Tell me about the service."

"I will tell you this evening. I want to hear what Uncle William says, and I care not to go over the matter twice. I wish rather that you would order me a cup of balm or peppermint tea. I am strangely fluttered and restless. Tarsset is very angry at Fanny for taking me to such a service. 'As if there wasn't bread enough and to spare in my Father's house,' she says; 'my Father's house' meaning of course St.

Paul's or St. George's. She put my prayer-book under my pillow, but it did me no good. I will have some balm tea, Claire, and then wash and refresh myself a little. I suppose you know that George has gone to France to see my brother Harry?"

"I asked George no questions. I was sure you would tell me all that you desired me to know."

"Indeed I will keep nothing from you, Claire." And then, as she drank her tea, she explained to Claire the circumstances which made it a most favourable time for Harry to ask a pardon. "And I truly think he will return with George, and then if he falls not in love with you, Claire, I shall fall out of love with him."

"You forget, Bernicia. I may yet have a lover."

"Harry will drive all other lovers before him."

Claire smiled, but did not pursue the subject, and on entering the parlour they found William Bouverie and madame in an animated conversation about the proposed removal of the Rev. Mr. Romaine from his curacy of St. George's parish.

"He has become a Methodist, I hear," said Bouverie, "and the church is now thronged with the common people, so that the regular sitters complain greatly of the crush, and of the damage done to the pew cushions and to their dignity."

"What then hinders his removal?" said madame. "The rector has the word in his own mouth."

"The old Earl of Northampton hinders. He is one of the parishioners, and he is on the side of the Methodist curate. It is said in the coffee-houses that he spoke up bravely, and reminded the fashionable congregation that they bore the greater crush of a ball-

room, or a racecourse, or a playhouse without inconvenience. But Romaine has been sitting at the feet of George Whitefield, and he is undoubtedly of a manly spirit in the things of God."

"Well, son William," answered madame, "it is time someone spoke on the Lord's side. I have been young and now I am old, but I never before saw the land so godless; and atheism so rampant. We need more Butlers and Sherlocks."

"We need more Whitefields and Wesleys, mother. We need great preachers of righteousness, far more than arguers and apologists. No man will ever be saved by Butler and Sherlock, but thousands are being saved daily by the preaching of the Cross of Christ. I tell you there is something wonderful in this religious movement called Methodism. Where it will grow to, I know not; but I was told to-day that Mr. Whitefield has had several interviews with the Prince of Wales, and that the prince is much moved by his entreaties. And in other ways the Word has a free course. There seems to be a thirst after righteousness in high places. Good Lady Huntington and the honourable women who——"

"*Good Lady Huntington!*" interrupted Bernicia. "She has the family taste for doing things beyond others. Fanny says the whole Ferrers family have mad blood. It takes the form of brutality in Lord Ferrers, and of bigotry in Lady Huntington."

"My dear niece, Lady Huntington has been favoured with many evidences of good. I hear that George Whitefield—a man certainly approved of God—has become her chaplain, and that he is shaking sinners in high places."

"Bernicia was at Lady Huntington's last Sabbath night," said Claire. "She can tell us if these things be so."

Madame was instantly interested.

"We will hear Bernicia," she said. "The little maid will stick to the truth. Were there so many there, and of such quality, as is reported, Bernicia? And what kind of countenance has this man? Come, child, you have a word I wish to listen to."

"I went with Fanny," answered Bernicia, blushing brightly at finding herself the centre of interest, "and though we were an hour before the sermon, it is true we found the street full of coaches, and the stairways and parlours of Lady Huntington's house crowded with a splendid throng of lords and ladies. You would have thought it was a rout, only that the people talked in a lower voice. And as Lady Huntington is always very attentive to newcomers, she brought Fanny and me to seats near a raised platform at the north end of the room. So while Fanny talked with the Countess of Chesterfield, I watched the company, and listened to their remarks."

"And pray what heard you?" asked madame.

"Someone sitting near me said, 'That saint, our friend Chesterfield, was here last Sunday, and he gave me such an account of Mr. Whitefield that I am anxious to hear this apostolic person.' He was, as you may perceive, grandmother, apologizing for being present, and laying the blame of his presence upon 'that saint, our friend Chesterfield.'"

"And what was the reply?"

"I heard it not perfectly, but it concerned Lady Townshend, who was reported to have said 'she did

not go out to dinner this season, for fear she should be offered a Methodist pie.' Then Lady Fanny Shirley entered, and Mrs. Howard whispered to a duchess on my left : ' Mr. Walpole thinks Lady Fanny is taking the way of Methodism to bestow the dregs of her beauty,' and the duchess laughed softly and answered ' Dear Mr. Walpole ! He is always so witty.' Such was the conversation of the saints waiting for the apostolic Mr. Whitefield. I dare say you are tired of it, grandmother."

"Go on, child."

"Indeed, I heard but one other remark worth the telling : Miss Betty Belhurst simpered to Lady Townshend, ' I hear it is reported that Mr. Whitefield will recant all his errors publicly, and make his obedience to his bishop.' And Lady Townshend looked at her scornfully, and spoke up as sharp and hot as mustard seed, ' No, miss, he will not recant ; he will only cant ! ' For nothing is more strange than Lady Townshend's liking and hating of Mr. Whitefield. She adores him one hour, and detests him the next. Fanny says : ' She is that way mad,' and in faith, I think I could be mad in the same direction ! "

"But this conversation went not on while Mr. Whitefield was preaching?" asked Bouverie.

"Had you ever heard Mr. Whitefield preach, uncle," answered Bernicia, "you would not imagine such a thing could ever come to pass. As soon as the velvet curtains parted and he walked forward to the front of the platform, there was a stillness so sudden and so perfect, that the flutter of a ribbon would have made you start."

"Is he handsome? Has he presence? Does he

look like one who has the divine call and seal?" asked madame.

"Indeed he has a graceful, beautiful presence, a beaming countenance, and a wondrously tuneful voice. And his silk gown and spotless bands might have served an archbishop. Oh, a very proper and bespeaking person, I can assure you!"

"And how did he order the service?" asked Bouverie. "Was it in the manner of the Church of England, with prayers and confessions?"

"There was no question of such service. It was evident he came to preach about Jesus Christ, and he struck that key at once. Christ was his first thought, and he had no second. 'Come away!' he cried. 'Come away out of all your doubts and desirings! Come away to the love of God in Christ Jesus! He will cause the lame to walk, and he will carry those who cannot go.' It was like the entreaty of an angel from heaven!" and Bernicia covered her face with her hands and was visibly affected at the memory. After a moment's silence she said softly, "I remember not the precise words, but they went through me with such sweet compelling power, that I am sure had the Christ been visibly present I had gone to his feet to weep there. But as Mr. Whitefield continued speaking his voice changed, and I was frightened at what he said, though he forced me to look at him as he asked, 'Oh, heart! heart! what art thou? the vainest, foolishhest, wickedest thing in nature. Yet Jesus asks for thee. Jesus died for thee. Oh, wonderful love! Oh, adorable love!' And of course I was angry that he should talk to me especially."

"Nay," said madame, "that was but the arrow conscience sent."

"That, or this, I tried not to heed his words, but rather to watch how others heeded them. So far I went in such intent, as to imagine how I would imitate this one, and that one, and perhaps also the preacher himself. Suddenly he paused and said in a voice that went to my inmost heart: 'Beware of premeditated sins. If you do wrong inadvertently, or passionately, or carelessly, you may dare to say, "Father, forgive me!" But when you plan *where* you will sin, and *how* you will sin, you wantonly insult the love and majesty of God; and you may not presume to come into his holy and awful presence.' I was sick with fear and wonder, for how could he discover my very thoughts? I liked it not. I was glad when there was a great sigh and a sudden silence, and the people began to move."

"I wish that I had been there," said Claire. "And pray tell us what took place after the sermon?"

"Mr. Whitefield talked to Lord Bolingbroke, who appeared to be pleased and very civil; indeed I heard him tell the preacher that he had 'done the attributes of the Almighty great justice.' Lord Chesterfield was also vastly polite, but it would have made you admire and wonder to see Pulteney—the great Earl of Bath—laying aside his politics and singing a hymn from the same book with Lady Chesterfield. Can you imagine it? Young Lord Dartmouth was there; and Sir Charles Hotham and Lady Gertrude Hotham, and many more of the primest quality. They stood talking softly in little groups; they wiped their eyes; they vowed it was all delightfully tender; but Fanny whispered to me: 'They will be at their cards and

their vanities as naturally as ever to-morrow morning.' "

"Fanny said more than she knew," interrupted madame. "Fanny Pomfret is not one of the Lord's privy councillors. If George Whitefield has sown good seed, such seed will never die!"

"Indeed, mother," said William Bouverie, "there is hope for every soul that was granted such a blessed opportunity."

"Many are called, few are chosen, son William," madame answered, with a judicial aspect.

"We must believe, mother, that all who heard such gracious words will answer them. Do you think there was one in that company who would have dared to stand up and say, *I have no Saviour?* "

Madame did not reply, and Bernicia continued: "The unhappy Lady Marlborough spoke for many besides herself, no doubt. I was at her side when Mr. Whitefield addressed her very feelingly about her soul, and she answered politely: 'Sir, your concern for my religious improvement is very obliging, and God knows we all need mending, and none more so than myself; but, sir——' Then she ceased speaking and Mr. Whitefield asked, 'But what?' So she went on half-crying, 'We women of wit and beauty and quality cannot bear such humiliating truths; they hurt our pride; yet as you say, sir, we must all die and converse with earth and worms.' She was pale and tearful, and her hands were in such a tremble she could hardly fasten her cloak; but in the next minute she was talking to Fanny about Lady Sarah Spencer's rout. And so, you see, it is as God pleases, after all. As for me, I will go no more to hear such sermons. Tarsset said truly,

I was right served for running after false shepherds, when the door of my own fold stood open."

"Has Tarsset heard Mr. Whitefield preach?" asked Claire.

"Tarsset prides herself upon being a faithful Church-woman, and she has very strong opinions about field preaching. She will not hear a word in Mr. Whitefield's favour. It is enough for her that he is disobeying his bishop and preaching out of a consecrated building. Last Sunday I offered her a book about him, and she would not touch it. She said 'she never read anything but her Bible and prayer-book; or on Sundays, maybe, a bit out of Fox's Book of Martyrs; and she thought she had gone through life none so badly.'"

"Did Mr. Whitefield speak to you, Bernicia?" asked madame.

"No. I was afraid of him. And let me tell you, Mr. Whitefield talking and Mr. Whitefield preaching are very different men. The talking man is not extraordinary, the preaching man is an apostle, a most seraphic creature indeed."

"And what opinion had your sister Fanny?"

"She was far from pleased, grandmother. Fanny thought his allusions to the nobility very impertinent; Mr. Whitefield would have shaken hands with Fanny, but she made him a courtesy and withdrew herself."

"But why did she go at all, if she intended only offence?"

"You must know that we went there, not to hear Mr. Whitefield, but to please Lady Chesterfield, who is only to be won on her Methodist side. And just now her favour is very necessary to us. For this reason

Fanny will go again, and she thinks it no bad entertainment for a Sunday night, if you only keep possession of yourself. As for me, I would rather stay with Target and talk about Cresswell; or even read romances to Lord Pomfret; for it is much to Fanny's credit that she likes not cards in her house on Sunday."

For an hour they talked on this subject, and Bernicia listened with the air of one who listens against her will. She was distraught; she said she had a headache, that she had not slept well lately, nor eaten, nor been like herself, and that Fanny thought she required a change of air. "So if Lord Pomfret can leave London," she added, "we are going into the country, and will give the vanities, the fops, and the beauties rest for a month or two." She laughed a little at the idea, but the laugh was without mirth; and rising, she continued, "Thank Heaven, I am suddenly sleepy! I beg you to excuse my company longer."

Now, there was in each heart a conviction that Bernicia was troubled as Felix was troubled, but only madame dared to touch the wounded soul. And this she did very tenderly, stroking the girl's hair and drawing her face downward, as she whispered, in answer to Bernicia's "Good-night, grandmother," "Child, child, Christ is waiting! Open the door unto him!"

The thought haunted Bernicia all through the night. Once she lifted her head from the pillow, and put her bare feet to the floor, and felt constrained to go to the door of the room. There was no one there. Her eyes were not opened. She did not see, as Colonel Gardiner had seen, the Crucified One with outstretched

arms and eyes of infinite pity entreating her. The long dark corridors were silent and empty, and sobbing bitterly she went back to her bed ; being miserable and fearful, and also angry at her misery and fear.

In the morning she was glad to escape from the society of Claire. Her calm satisfaction and her placid happiness was irritating. She wondered how it was that Claire had no regrets for her present life, and no fears for her future one. Claire, however, had not heard Mr. Whitefield preach, and Bernicia determined to persuade Fanny to take her to Lady Huntington's next service. "I own I should be glad to see her complacency shaken a little," she thought.

In this mood she met Lady Pomfret, whose first words were : "Why, Bernicia, you look as if you had an ague ! No more lace, I see."

"I am sure grandmother had not one lace thought. Her talk was of religion and the clergy. She had no leanings to this world and its vanities."

"Lord Rashleigh will be here in an hour."

"Pray what does that signify ?"

"That you may be Lady Rashleigh before Christmas if you play your cards well."

"Let someone win Lord Rashleigh who wants him. I will play them a losing game."

"What objections have you to him !"

"Grammercy ! The man is a fool. He sells his life for a pack of cards and a dice box."

"He is of a most ancient family."

"I wish that the Flood had washed it away—root and branch."

"When you first met Lord Rashleigh, you appeared to be well inclined to him."

"'Tis a long time since I first met him. He has delayed too much. There never is a lucky hour after the first opportunity. He missed it."

"You are contradictory and disagreeable, Bernicia."

"I can no more help it, Fanny, than I can change my destiny."

"You have not been yourself since you heard Mr. Whitefield preach."

"I think Mr. Whitefield's opinions will be the death of me."

"The low, base fellow! As for my Lady Dowager Hypocrite, I have no patience with the creature. She stands above us only on Mr. Whitefield's shoulders. And her motives are easily to be seen. She has no beauty to make men run after her; dancing gives her a vertigo; she always loses at cards; and so, to make herself of some account in the world, she has taken to piety and preachings. Did you really hear any unusual word from Mr. Whitefield? He is, to be sure, very handsome and graceful, but never trust me, if these advantages are not the whole of this 'heavenly-minded' person's excellencies."

"We are no happier for talking of Mr. Whitefield. I wish that you would take Claire Abney with you next Sunday. I confess that it would please me if he made her tremble a little."

"Tremble! Let me assure you it is most unnecessary. Mrs. Russell told me this morning that the great Bishop Wilson, being asked about the terrors of Mr. Whitefield's hearers, said, 'Men and women could love God without being terrified of him, and that it

was only devils who believed and trembled.' Depend upon 'it Mr. Whitefield's doctrines are very heretical and abominable."

"I am not a good woman, Fanny. I wish I were."

"You are very suitable to the station in life in which it has pleased God to place you. Could you be content to go to heaven at once? Do not look up and down, and east and west, and north and south about it. Answer me, could you be content to go to heaven at once?"

"Not immediately, Fanny. Perhaps on my conscience, not very heartily."

"You would wish a little more of this world first?"

"I may say so much, truly."

"Then you must look about you. Will you credit me when I say that Allan Cresswell was here last night, and that he so worked on Lord Pomfret that he promised to bring him to the king without delay?"

"What is to be done? We have no word yet from Harry."

"I have told Lord Pomfret what is *not* to be done. The fellow had persuaded him that Cresswell was naught but barren moors, and the castle falling away, and that a thousand pounds would be a full portion for me, and John is needing money,—he always is needing money,—and he took the bait, and the matter had been settled but that my signature was wanting to it."

"And mine also. Did the wretch think I would sell my birthright in Cresswell for all the gold in England?"

"He thought your signature would follow mine, that you would be moved as Lord Pomfret and I

wished you, that, in fact, a thousand pounds in hand would be more to you than all Cresswell in futurity."

"What did you say to Lord Pomfret?"

"'Tis no matter what I said. In the end my words were very convincing to him."

"Was he angry?"

"He had a fit of temper. While it lasted he had a busy time with it. But it did not last long, for the dispute led him naturally to the Stuarts, and the Stuarts to the king, and the king to the devil, and the last party put him in the wrong. Then I had only to show him that we had truth on our side. 'Tis a pity that truth can only be on one side, is it not, Bernicia?"

"Faith! I think not. I do not wish my enemies to be as far right as myself. What said Lord John, then?"

"Something about 'a little brimstone wife.' And when John gets to calling names, he is lost. I fell into a temper, and I am always handsome when I am in a temper. So John saw that he was in the wrong, and he gave up the whole business, crust and crumb. And it is a pleasure to me this morning to think of Allan Cresswell kicking his heels at the place appointed. Let him wear his hopes threadbare in watching and waiting. By the Lord Harry, it is good enough for the traitor!"

"What an obliging husband you have, Fanny!"

"I trust I know that much, without a lesson on it. Yet I would like to do something to show that I value his kindness, and it came into my head that if you would marry Lord Rashleigh——"

"I could not! I could not! Indeed, I could not!"

"Then why do you go out with him? Why do you

see him? Why do you sing to him? Why do you dance with him? Do you ever intend to be less cruel? All these questions the world is asking."

"I do not pretend to be able to answer the world."

"Sh-h! Here he comes! I know the clatter of his sword."

"Then do not leave me! If you do, I will treat him very ill."

"Never fear; I will play propriety."

But Rashleigh had scarcely paid his respects when Mrs. Willoughby and her two daughters entered. They had some close confidence with Lady Pomfret, and, in a few minutes, Bernicia was left standing by an open window with her lover.

"I see that you are dressed for the street," he said.

"I have just come from the street." Then, turning to Jackanapes, she said: "Go and tell Tarsset I want her."

As she spoke she was removing her scarf and bonnet, and when Tarsset answered her summons, she bid her take them to the dressing-room, adding: "When you have done so, bring me here a glass of cinnamon water, for I am strangely faint this morning. Will you also have a glass?" she asked of Lord Rashleigh; "you know the great dean says it is a sovereign remedy for an indigestion."

"I do not trust the dean's remedy, any more than I trust the bishop's," replied Rashleigh. "Swift stands by cinnamon water, and Berkeley swears that tar water will cure every mortal ill. Only yesterday I asked my apothecary in Cheapside if he sold much tar water, and he answered: 'I sell nothing else.' Tar water! I trust I know how to drink more cleanly!"

"I was speaking of cinnamon water, my lord."

"I entreat a thousand pardons for speaking of the spice and the tar together. Are you indeed out of health? I am most sorry. Is there anything I can do to pleasure you?"

"Why, yes. But would you do it?"

"On my life, yes! What do you desire?"

"I have a cousin, a very wretch. If you would only run him twice through the body with your sword."

"'Twould be murder."

"Challenge him, and make it honourable murder."

"The man is unknown to me—has not wronged me. You are joking?"

"Far from it. The man has it in his mind to rob us of house and land. I wish that he was hanged! I wish I were a man, that I might force quittance at a sword's point!"

"Give me a right to do so, and I will lift your quarrel. Marry me to-day, and I will challenge him to-morrow."

"You would turn me into a bargain—so much for so much?"

"Is not everything in life so much for so much?"

"I see that we shall not come to terms; and, indeed, I am very little in earnest."

"But I am very much in earnest."

"'Tis a pity of it! Let us talk of other things. Do you remember the first night we met?"

"'Tis not in my power to forget it."

"You spoke of having heard Mr. Whitefield preach."

"I was then full of Mr. Whitefield."

"Have you heard him since that time?"

"I have made a point of *not* hearing him. My friend, young Rotherham, says 'he always leaves a thorn behind a sermon, some word that rankles and rankles.' 'Tis a point of comfort to avoid such words."

"I wish that you would go to Moorfields and hear Mr. Whitefield preach."

"I must rise at midnight, then. I will go to Lady Huntington's again, if it will please you."

"That will not satisfy me. I have heard Mr. Whitefield preach to sinners like ourselves. I want to know what he says to the common herd. Go to Moorfields for me. Find out how Mr. Whitefield looks there ; what he says, how he says it ; what kind of people listen to him, and how they take the dreadful things he is sure to say."

"I will go at the first opportunity ; though I must own I am most indisposed that way."

"I thought you admired the preacher ?"

"A man may change his opinions."

"Yes, if he be a shuttlecock of a man, tossed by every hand and driven by every wind. In plain truth, will you go for me ?"

"In plain truth, I will go."

"I am, then, your humble servant for the courtesy. Let us now see what new slander is on. Mrs. Willoughby is all chastity and odour, but she makes no more of a woman's character than a mower does of the grass. Oh !" she cried, with a contemptuous shrug, "oh, the pious friendships of the female sex !"

This arrangement with Lord Rashleigh did Bernicia more good than the cinnamon water she sipped as she made it. She was really anxious to discover if George

Whitefield preached the same doctrines to princes and to beggars ; if he spoke as eloquently in the fields as in the drawing-room ; if the souls of those clothed in rags and those clothed in purple and fine linen were of equal value in his sight ; in short, whether the Gospel preached in Park Street and the Gospel preached in Moorfields was the same Gospel. If there was any shortcoming in Whitefield in this respect, she felt certain his words would no longer trouble her. She would assure her heart they were only clever words, and the sermon under which she had trembled merely a Sabbath day tragedy.

CHAPTER V.

HARRY'S RETURN.

IT was now June, but Lady Pomfret still lingered in town. She said she had an ailing, and required her London physician ; that her mantua-maker had not finished her new *negligé*, and that it was impossible for her to go to the country without it. But the real cause of her delay was her brother. She wished to be in London when he arrived, and she regarded the absence of the gay world as extremely favourable. Lady Chesterfield and Mrs. Greenfield—from whose influence she hoped most—were both with the court ; the general busybodies were scattered, and the court itself in unusual good temper over the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the preliminaries to which had already been signed. As one of the terms of this peace was an absolute renouncement of the claims of the Stuarts by all the great European powers, mere individual partisanship was become a thing too small for state notice, and Lady Pomfret rightly conceived that the very nick of time had come for the king's clemency, if only Harry was fortunate enough to catch it.

Her "ailing" was fortunately not so severe as to hinder her usual gaieties, and there were yet balls and operas, water excursions, and musical parties to keep her dressing. But Bernicia showed the anxiety Lady Pomfret only felt. She was angry at George and also at Harry. She thought they might have

sent a letter. She was sure they might have been in London ; a particle of common sense would have taught both of them that it was now neck or nothing with Harry's cause. Such was her conversation with her sister and with Tarsset, though perhaps if the spring of it had been analyzed, this overflow called "Harry" would have been found to contain many other elements.

One evening Lady Pomfret had a dinner party, and Bernicia was talking merrily with Mr. Horace Walpole. This gentleman had the whim of reproaching the world for doing nothing, and was indulging it to his new auditor :

"The wonderful is worn out, Miss Cresswell," he said, as he stroked his ruffles and looked upward ; "we have no elopements, and no plots, and the sun and the moon go on as they always do, and we are in such a state of sameness that I wonder at the change of of the seasons."

"There is the new peace, Mr. Walpole," answered Bernicia, "and His Grace of Newcastle's antics about it. I have heard that he will certainly carry his chairs and tables with him into Hanover, not believing that they exist anywhere out of England. And again, there are a thousand wagers that he will fall dangerously ill, rather than go at all. I am sure, Mr. Walpole, the 'peace' is new and very amusing."

"It might be, if it progressed with more rapidity. But we make peace as slowly as we make war. So I, who would wish to ride on the whirlwind, am compelled to endure the yawns of the age. Were you at the Stanhope ball ? And when will you honour my little villa ? It is rather a pretty place, I assure you."

"Indeed, sir, I have heard as much."

"Have you seen the town and all its wonders?"

"I am weary of the town and all its wonders."

"And of the great men, who think the age will be called after them?"

"I have seen them all—from the king to Mr. Whitefield."

"Mr. Whitefield, indeed! A low, presumptuous fellow! He has turned the world upside down, only because it is such a silly world."

"I think Mr. Whitefield is almost a prophet, sir."

"He may have the ignorance of one, but he is without the inspiration."

"Indeed, I think he is a miracle of nature. He has powers that dart from earth to heaven in a moment. If you could ride on Mr. Whitefield's whirlwind, it might be better than enduring the yawns of the age."

"Very good, Miss Cresswell. Shall we dance? Or will you play brag? Or walk in the garden until the tables are laid? Show me how to be civil enough to you."

"We will sit here by the window, and you shall tell me of your travels."

"Pray ask my pardon for setting me on such a theme. I am now mad about England, and have forsworn all travelling in foreign lands. Do you know, Mr. Sterne thinks King David's desire for his enemies to be made 'like unto a wheel' was a bitter sarcasm against the spirit of travelling, which the Jewish monarch foresaw would haunt the children of men in the latter days—the most severe imprecation he could think of, against those who hated him; as if he had said, I wish them no worse luck than to be always

rolling about, always in motion, therefore always miserable and unquiet."

Bernicia laughed, and Mr. Walpole laughed, and there was a general movement toward the adjoining parlours. Some of the ladies sat down to whist or silver faro, and some began to choose partners for a dance. The murmur of conversation mingled with the tuning of violins, the tapping of heels, and the movement of chairs upon the polished floor, and amid this pleasant confusion Lord Pomfret and a few gentlemen slipped away to an inner room, where they could indulge their passion for quinze and deep basset without fear of molestation. But Bernicia sat with Mr. Walpole at the open window, and Lord Rashleigh watched them, and fretted himself into a fever of jealousy. Suddenly Jackanapes touched Bernicia, and she turned with a smile and asked :

"What do you want, sirrah?"

"There is someone to see Miss Cresswell."

But even while Jackanapes was speaking, the door opened and a young man entered the room. Quick as a thought Bernicia saw him. "Ten thousand pardons, Mr. Walpole!" she exclaimed, and the next moment she had taken the stranger's hands, and her whole air and attitude was that of a caress.

"She would have kissed the fellow had she met him alone," thought Mr. Walpole. "She did kiss him in intent, and if he has any of his senses he must know it. I thought she was fresh and fancy free—so there goes another dream."

While these thoughts were in his mind he witnessed a similar enthusiasm in Lady Pomfret's greeting; and then Bernicia and the stranger left the room together.

So Mr. Walpole, who had been slowly sauntering toward the group, turned back to his place at the window. Lord Rashleigh arrested him.

"Since you are deserted by Beauty, sir, will you tempt Fortune with me?" he asked.

The cynical courtier dropped his eyes and answered with a slight smile, "Alas, my lord, my means are not equal to your skill! To-night I have foresworn cards."

"Know you anything new of the peace, sir?"

"I have nothing to tell, and am glad of it."

"Then we may forgive history for knowing nothing, since even Mr. Walpole no longer prophesies or relates. Still I will ask you, by what good luck, or good quality, do the Pelhams hoodwink the nation so far?"

"I set myself no such riddling. The infatuation of a nation for foolish ministers is very like that of a man for an ugly woman. When once the eyes are opened, the question is, What devil bewitched us?"

"It is said you are entirely dissatisfied with public affairs and will therefore leave England."

"A thousand falsities are abroad."

"And the son of Sir Robert Walpole must love England?"

"He would, if it were not for Englishmen."

"Sir, such opinions will not add to your popularity."

"As I am indifferent to popularity and content with my fortune, the naked truth is good enough for me. Those who wish to be exalted may lie and prosper."

"Indeed, Mr. Walpole, you have a reputation for telling snarling, odious truths, and I will not tempt

France? No. In Italy? No. Have I played with him? Drank with him? Travelled with him? No. No. No. Yet I have seen him before. Where have I seen him?"

His sword lay on the table. He stretched out his hand and grasped it. A faint smile answered the touch, and he assured himself that, come what might, he had a friend that would permit no one to interfere with his claims or tamper with his honour.

Had he known that the stranger was Bernicia's brother he would doubtless have regretted so great a waste of feeling. And yet it was not waste; for right or wrong it is well for every soul sometimes to touch the bottom of its nature, and so the experience, though it came from a false estimate of conditions, revealed Lord Rashleigh to Lord Rashleigh with a startling distinctness. As the selfish tumult subsided, he suddenly became aware that Bernicia had slipped from his mind, and that without intent or apparent cause George Whitefield had taken possession of him. Clearer than actuality was the seraphic face and the silvery tones of the preacher. And the words he had said came back to his memory and beat upon his conscience like the blows of a hammer on the anvil. He almost feared to raise his eyes lest he should see—as he had once been made to see—the piteous Cross and its Divine Sufferer in the shadows of the room. "I must sleep," he muttered. "I must forget. This girl is driving me to distraction."

At the same hour the innocent cause of this mental tumult was sitting with his sisters in Lady Pomfret's room. He had eaten and refreshed himself and was

enjoying to the uttermost the almost forgotten delight of sympathetic conversation.

"We may talk to our heart's content now," said Lady Pomfret. "It is past midnight and all are gone but the gentlemen who are at play with Lord John."

"And they," said Bernicia, "will shake their elbows and throw dice until their purses or their senses fail them. Harry, are you not glad to be in England again?"

"Put it to yourself, Bernicia. When Cousin George walked into my poor room one morning I had nothing left; money, faith, hope, friends were at an end. George came in the very nick of time, for I was as far out of heart as a man could be. He gave me hope, he fed and clothed me, he put gold in my purse, and he did all with so much of brotherhood that I had no sense of aught but loving kindness in the service. So I took heart again and came back to England and to you. When a man has such sisters and such kindred he wishes to live."

It was not to be expected, however, that much wise counsel could be taken in the first hours of such a reunion. Allan Cresswell's designs, the likelihood of the king's clemency, the best methods of obtaining it, the necessity for Harry to remain incognita until the decisive act was ripe for execution, all these topics were superficially discussed. The next evident question was the position Lord Pomfret would be likely to take. He might seriously object to Harry's presence in his house, and Lady Pomfret thought, in such case, it would be well to regard his prejudices, the more so, as he would then feel obliged to grant more vital favours.

"I think Lord Rashleigh would give Harry privacy," said Bernicia, "and if not, there is grandmother."

"Grandmother is a very hard old woman," answered Lady Pomfret. "If Harry has to go to Bloomsbury Square, he had better go to Uncle William at once."

"Not so," asserted Bernicia positively. "Uncle William puts his principles above his feelings. Grandmother can be moved to send her principles packing. Faith, I am sure of it."

"If I could remain with my own people I should like it best," said Harry. "If not, a room in some private lodging."

"A private lodging would be a dangerous one. Cousin Allan is doubtless watching, and in any disguise he would recognize you. But he will not suspect your presence with Lord Rashleigh, nor yet in such a Whiggery as Uncle's William's residence."

"How long is this uncertainty to last? If Lord Pomfret can but get me access to the Presence, I will throw myself at the king's feet and take whatever punishment he is disposed to give me."

"You will throw everything away by such hurry. Lady Chesterfield—who is the king's natural sister—turns him to her wish very easily. At present, she is bringing to the royal closet a very famous preacher, who is moving the king and the queen to religious things, a circumstance very favourable to you. But I must find the right hour to speak to Lady Chesterfield, and this may be to-morrow or it may be a month hence. Come, let us say good-night. It is high time we were asleep, if we purpose anything for to-morrow."

The next day it was noon ere Lady Pomfret met

her husband. Both had breakfasted alone, and Lord Pomfret was ready for a visit to the palace, where he had important business. He came fully dressed into his wife's room, his swarthy face as ruddy, his eyes as bright, his wig as elaborately curled, his velvet and lace as spotless as if he had been sleeping and dressing, instead of gambling during the livelong night. Lady Pomfret affected an unusual attitude. She lay in her white mull *negligé* with closed eyes upon her couch. Her fine hair was undressed and an air of becoming lassitude lent a rare charm to her personality. She stretched out her arms with the prettiest languors to her husband, and he was all sympathy and caresses to answer them.

"Are you obliged to leave me?" she asked. "I vow I am weary of all the world but you, John. And I am so worried, I have not shut my eyes all night. Indeed, my love, I am at my wits' end."

"Then let me tell you, Fanny, that I have all my wits about me. I have held trumps all night, and if it is money, I will not see you pale for a thousand."

"You are good beyond everything, John. It is not money."

"Did you quarrel with the great duchess last night, or did Mr. Walpole make an epigram about you? Tell me the trouble, and I will blow it to the four winds of heaven."

"'Tis my brother Harry. He has lost his senses, I think. He has come back to England, and he vows the king may have his estate and his head, if he will only give him a grave in his native land. He is far gone every way. He is distracted. Don't look so angry, John. If you bite your lips and knit your

brows I shall go into a syncope. I am now ill. I am fainting. Call my woman. Oh ! oh ! oh !”

“Fanny ! Fanny ! adorable Fanny ! Great Heaven ! she is dying ! Fanny, speak to me ! Look at me. You know I will stand by you, through everything.”

“Poor Harry ! He will be beheaded. He says he wants to be beheaded. He is so tired of life.”

“Fiddlesticks ! The king dare not behead him. He does not even want to behead him.”

“I cannot turn my own, my only brother into the streets. I—can—not—do—it.”

“And I cannot have the foolish young man in my house. My enemies would put me in the Tower on it. I mean they would howl me out of office.”

“I know, John. It is not right that you should be annoyed. Perhaps Rashleigh, if you asked him——”

“Rashleigh is my friend, Fanny.”

“And ’tis a point of honour to consider your friend’s safety. Harry is only *my* brother. However, there is Grandmother Bouverie.”

“Now your senses are coming back, Fanny. Madame Bouverie is the proper person. Let Harry go to Bloomsbury Square. William Bouverie is such a well known Whig that nothing worse than a fine could come to him, even if your brother was found there. I wonder what the young man proposes in coming back ? For my own part I am sorry to know it. I wish he was in France. I wish he was at the ends of the earth !”

“*John !*”

“I do. I do, indeed ! He has made you ill, and he has flustered me out of all my calculations. Why did he come to my house ? I have neither the mind nor the time to be whistled here and there on his affairs.”

"Of course you have neither mind nor time to pleasure *me*. The great duke waits for you. The king is crying, Where is my Lord Pomfret? Where is he? Where is he? London is speechless. England is breathless. The peace is waiting at Aix-la-Chapelle for your nod. I am nobody; I am nothing but a poor sorrowful, unloved, troublesome wife."

Then she closed her eyes, and her pretty form shook with passionate sobs.

With a heart divided between love and anger, Lord Pomfret was seriously annoyed and distressed.

"My dearest creature," he said, "you are as cruel as you are lovely and unreasonable. But if it is your will, and the thing is feasible and able to be brought to pass, I will see what I can do in your brother's affairs. Cease weeping; you know right well that every sob is like a sword-thrust to me."

She only sobbed the more distractedly, and Lord Pomfret finally went away. Truly he went with kisses and promises, and many adoring words, but it was a mood he cast off with an impatient *Tush!* as soon as the door was closed, and which easily slipped into such forcible exclamations as to strike his coachman dumb.

From a corner of the window Lady Pomfret watched this exhibition of feeling. She thoroughly understood it, and went to her morning-room with the conviction that it would not be prudent to try Lord John's affection further. She had a sense of failure. Bernicia, who had risen late, was just eating her breakfast, and the blending aromas of chocolate and buttered crumpets was refreshing and appetizing.

"I think I will have a cup, Tarsset," said Lady Pom-

fret, and then turning to Bernicia, "I have been forced to endure one of Lord Pomfret's tantrums this morning, and they always wear me out. Where is Harry? It was about his affairs."

"Harry is yet asleep. How went his affairs with Lord John?"

"They did not go an inch. And I can do nothing while Harry is in this house, for his presence irritates beyond endurance. My astrologer told me that there were malicious conjunctions in the third house of my nativity, which would bring me trouble through my kindred; and I suppose I may thank my stars for the blunders I have made this morning. If I had begged John in my usual way, with kisses and smiles, he was in a humour to have given me anything I asked for. I hope I may be whipped if I try crying again. Put on your white and yellow lutestring, Bernicia, for if Lord Rashleigh comes this morning with his usual civilities, it might be well——"

"To ask his help. Faith, I will give him the opportunity he is ever praying for, to be of some service to me. But I do not think I can flatter him to our will. He was in a perilous passion with me last night. I could feel it across the room."

"It was your own fault. Was there no one to flaunt him for, but that finnick Mr. Walpole? You know already that Rashleigh detests him. Why are you so silly, so provoking, so everything no one wants you to be?"

"Pray what is wrong with Mr. Walpole?"

"Pray who are the Walpoles now? They are out of court and out of favour. And this Mr. Horace Walpole is a younger son, a fancier of curiosities and such

childish things ! Imagine any sane man buying old coins, when he ought to be securing those of his present Majesty. I have heard that he gave three Georgian guineas for a battered silver piece of some old Roman emperor. What pitiable folly ! Besides he is not a marrying man. He loves Horace Walpole too well to love any woman better."

"That is easily seen and believed. *Old bachelor* is writ all over him, and in capital letters too."

"Now, if you have finished your chocolate, go and make yourself a little more bespeaking. The white and yellow lutestring is the very thing. Let me see how pretty you look when you have put it on."

But Lord Rashleigh called before the toilet was finished, and so Bernicia went to the parlour from her mirror. Being well pleased with herself, and having met no one to modify her satisfaction, she entered her lover's presence in a temper to which his air of injury was extremely irritating. Two attitudes were possible under such conditions, she could be haughty and indifferent ; or she could be conciliating and provoke explanations. And as she wished to influence her lover, she choose the latter course.

"Did you remain late last evening?" she said. "Did you dance ? Did you play ? How went the hours after I left the room ? Or perhaps you were not aware of my absence."

"I saw you leave the room. You were strangely glad to do so. You had a visitor, apparently a very dear one."

"Indeed, you know not how dear. And I *was* glad to leave the room. Do you think that a miracle ? Mr. Walpole is charming, but he has so many clever

things to say that I felt a very fool in his presence. I was very thankful to be interrupted."

"And by so handsome a claimant on your attention."

"Yes, Harry is handsome and brave and honourable. I wish that you knew him well. You would love him as I do."

"I already hate him !"

"You are very uncivil to me."

"I have good reason to be uncivil to you, Miss Cresswell. You deceive me ! You have been deceiving me ever since I knew you ! I am sure of it."

"Faith, I was just going to give you my dearest confidence. I was just going to tell you all about poor Harry,—how much he needs a friend and a shelter, for he is in some danger for his political opinions,—and I had hoped that, for my sake, you would find him secrecy until his matters could be arranged."

"You hope too much. I receive too small favour from you myself to endure the thought of any other man being the object of your solicitude. By Heaven ! I would rather kill him than shelter him ! And if this is the extent of your confidence, I most flatly dispense with it."

"You are impertinent, sir ! And I think you very willingly misunderstand me."

"Your servant, Miss Cresswell. I will not trespass longer on time so plainly not my time."

"But, my lord, let me explain. Do you imagine the stranger to be my lover ? Do you think——"

The questions were lost in the clash of the door, which Rashleigh shut with so much temper as to completely drown Bernicia's voice. She was indignant,

and she stamped her foot passionately as she exclaimed :

"Go! I am glad to see you go. By all that is good, I would not willingly owe you a cherry stone! George Abney is worth a score of such servants."

Indeed, her first feeling was one of relief, and not of disappointment. She ran, she rather danced, along the corridor to her sister's presence, and, entering it in a glow of satisfaction, said :

"Here is a miracle of ingratitude! Rashleigh, in spite of our favour, has gone away in a rage at my proposition. He pretended a fit of jealousy to excuse his rudeness. Never tell me romances about love. Love is now become a worldly-wise little god, and follows after Fortune."

"I am sorry Lord Rashleigh has disappointed us."

"Not I. Had he obliged us in Harry's affair he would have stretched a claim for my generosity on it; and, if it comes to speaking truly, I have no mind to dance to his piping."

"But what is to be done? Lord Pomfret will be home early, and will doubtless be sulking after a spoiled day. There could be no worse hour to bring Harry again to his notice."

"I will go with Harry to Bloomsbury this afternoon. For grandmother is not to be taken with formal approaches; she must be made to surrender at once. Order the coach, Fanny, and write a letter to Cousin George; for even if one lacks gratitude, politeness is not so very unfashionable."

"Say for me whatever you think civil and proper. But I hope for no good from either William or

Madame Bouverie. Suppose grandmother entirely refuses Harry's claim upon her?"

"Suppose she takes a distracting fancy to him? We may as well suppose one thing as another; for no plan is worth a finger-snap until we have put it to the test. So warn Harry and order the coach, and I will begin the attack on grandmother. How it will end nobody knows."

Bernicia's hurry was not an inconsiderate impulse. She wished to catch the hour before dinner, when madame would, in all probability, be alone. She thought this private introduction best for Harry's case; and, though she was no coward personally, she preferred it to an entry with her brother when the whole Bouverie household would be present.

As she anticipated, she found madame alone, and resting both from thought and labour. Her knitting had fallen from her hands and her eyes were closed. Harry looked at her a moment, and his heart overflowed. Old she might be, but she was old just as his beloved mother would have become old. In that moment she became dearer to him than any other woman. He did not need the assuring look in Bernicia's eyes. He stepped forward rapidly and dropped on one knee at her side. He took her thin hands captive in his young strong ones and said in a voice musical with love:

"Grandmother!"

She heard the word. She knew the voice. It was the voice of her long lost Frances. With a start she sat upright, and her eyes fell upon the handsome youth watching her. She saw that there were tears in the eyes so like her own. She saw loving messages

from the dead in that strange, yet familiar, face. For a moment she looked into it with wonder, with reluctance even ; then, like a flash, the tide of everlasting mother-love rushed into her heart. Smiles parted her stern lips ; she threw her arms around the young man's neck and kissed him. It was as if a dead woman had come back to life. And madame herself was conscious of some marvellous resurrection of feeling ; for never, since Dr. Doddridge had taught her in her old age to sing the name of Jesus, had she felt the glow and glory of such happiness as she now experienced.

"Harry Cresswell !" she said softly, as she kissed, and then again kissed him, "I know you. You are your mother's very son. Kiss me for my poor dead Frances."

The tears of the aged are cold and slow, but madame wept as freely as any young mother over a recovered child. And while this gracious overflow softened and charmed the old woman, Bernicia spoke for her brother. She told madame everything, even to the part George had taken in bringing home the exile ; and madame responded with the very satisfactory inquiry :

"What can be done for Harry, and how can I help him ?"

"You must shelter him, grandmother," said Bernicia, "until the king can be spoken to. Lady Chesterfield can save both Harry's life and his estate, if she can be moved to take an interest in him."

"And if what I have heard be correct, George Whitefield can move her to take such an interest."

"That is beyond a doubt."

"Then we must move George Whitefield. A straight road is the nearest road."

At this point Bernicia thought Harry might safely be left with madame. She was anxious to tell Claire, and she ran swiftly upstairs, crying "Claire! Claire! Sweet Claire! Harry is in the parlour. Come and see him. Let me tell you he has taken grandmother captive with a look and a word. Oh, 'tis wonderful! 'Tis past all knowledge! Put on your blue ribbons and your amber ornaments. Your gown is without fault. It is like a white cloud; but do pray hurry a little with your dressing."

"I have already finished dressing."

"But your ornaments? Your bows and baubles?"

"I do not intend to wear them. I have some scruples about them. They are a mere vanity—a pampering of my pride."

"If it comes to that, why wear buckles on your shoes? or clocks on your stockings? Why wear ruffles on your palerine? Ruffles are a great pampering of vanity! And how very thoughtless it was of the Creator to pamper the rose-brier, and let it wear roses! And surely He ought not to let the grass be bespangled with buttercups and daisies! And what do you think of those pampered birds who are permitted to wear bright scarlet and blue and yellow vests and top-knots? Here is your amber, Claire. How thankful you ought to be for a guardian who trades with the Baltic. Such amber can only have come that way. It is like solid sunshine. Now I am sure that to possess amber like solid sunshine, and not to wear it, is a great ingratitude to the Giver of all good and lovely things."

"You may be right, Bernicia. And yet I may not be wrong. I wish to satisfy my own conscience."

"My dear Claire, there is, as my sister Fanny says, a certain modesty in wearing ornaments. If you go down in that unadorned, angelic gown, you seem to say: 'I have no need to adorn my beauty.' Or you give the impression forsooth that you do not wish ribbons and amber to catch the admiration which should alone be given to your adorable eyes and long bright hair."

"Let us go downstairs, Bernicia," said Claire quietly. "If your brother Harry is home, then my brother George is also home; and he will not thank me for detaining you here."

"So you are determined to take your own way. That is what comes of being so religious, so wilful, so contradictory. Now, I am all grace and complaisance, and what can I do to pleasure you? But sinners are good-natured; while saints do not care a jot for anything but their own interest. They call it their 'eternal interest,' but do you think eternal selfishness any better than temporal selfishness? Do you, Claire? Do you? Do you really think it any better, Claire?"

She was almost dancing down the stairway as she chattered and questioned, waiting for no answers, and caring for none, until she stood with Claire at the closed door of the parlour. Then she looked into Claire's face, and asked with a playful smile:

"Is it one of my handsome days? Am I the very pink of perfection? Is my gauze uncrushed? Are my French fripperies quite the thing? Are my looks all intelligence and expression? Am I one of the sweetest creatures alive?"

"George shall answer for me," said Claire, opening the door. Harry's hand was on George's shoulder as they went in, and George was talking with earnestness; while madame, slightly leaning toward them, had the air of one who gives an interested yet dissenting attention.

The entrance of Bernicia and Claire made a swift interruption. George, with a rapid bow of apology to madame, came forward to meet them; offering with impulsive delight both his hands to Bernicia. She spread out her skirt and her "fripperies" and made him a charming courtesy; and then "hoped he was well returned, and vowed he looked sunbrowned, and sea blown, and a thousand times better than she had ever seen him look. Besides which," she added, "you have caught the French air, sir."

"Ho! ho!" laughed George. "That I dispute. I am too sincerely English at heart to take the French air outwardly."

"Then 'tis a pity, sir," said Bernicia, with mock seriousness; "*à la France* happens to be the word in fashion here, as in France it is *à l'Anglaise*. Have you seen the book published there called 'The Anglo-manie'? And pray, sir, why did you not deliver your commission in person? Poor Harry marched straight into the enemy's camp last night; for you must know that my sister Fanny had a dinner party. Fortunately, the brains of the company were either in their hands with the cards, or in their feet with the fiddles. Had they been better employed, Harry's stalking into their midst had been a rare riddle for their wit or their ill-nature."

Ere George could explain his apparent carelessness,

William Bouverie entered, and the men serving the dinner followed immediately. He looked harassed and sombre, and madame for the moment felt a little flutter of anxiety, such as she had been a stranger to for many a year. But she rose, put her hand through Harry's arm, and advanced a few steps saying :

"Son William, this is my grandson, Harry Cresswell. I have asked him to be my guest for a short time. His visit is a very great pleasure to me."

Bouverie was far from being pleased, but madame had appealed to him in an irresistible manner. He had a great reverence for his mother, and a hypersensitive fear lest she might feel herself in any way less than mistress of his house. Had not this motive existed there still remained the powerful sense of hospitality and the chivalrous regard for a guest which was then a national trait with the strength of centuries behind it ; and thus swayed by instinctive interests allied to his very nature, he found it impossible to be aught but courteous to his nephew.

Yet it was a silent, perturbed meal, and the atmosphere was infectious. Madame appeared to be lost in thought ; George answered his guardian's questions in respectful monosyllables ; Harry ate little and said less ; and Claire scarcely lifted her eyes. Bernicia made a struggle against the manifest depression, but even she was finally compelled to say "she would content herself with looking as cheerful as any girl could do in that condition."

Her uncle smiled at the air with which this decision was given, and asked : "Pray, what condition, Bernicia ?"

"Oh, the humour of the family, Uncle William !

'Tis a silent humour, and 'tis a pity, for I am in a mood to talk wisely, if the hour would but permit me."

"I met Lord and Lady Pomfret as I came home," he answered, as if willing to turn the conversation to the Pomfret family. "They were going with out-riders and footmen to court, I suppose?"

"Indeed, no! They were going to sup at Ranelagh. Everybody of importance now goes there; for, as Mr. Walpole says, the very floor is of beaten princes: you cannot set your foot down without treading on a Prince of Wales or a Duke of Cumberland. Lord Chesterfield is so in love with the place that he has all his letters addressed there."

"How singular!" said George. "Lord Chesterfield must have many letters of grave importance."

"Perhaps 'tis only his *billets-doux* that have a post at Ranelagh," suggested Harry.

He made the remark aimlessly, but it was an unfortunate one. Nobody answered it; silence again prevailed; and Bernicia, with a shrug and a scornful smile, accepted a condition of things she found herself unable to alter.

After dinner William Bouverie excused himself on the plea of a meeting of the City Council; and then, the night being warm, the parlour door was thrown open, and George took Bernicia by the hand and led her into the large hall. There he began to talk to her of the men whose portraits filled it; and while the servants were passing to and fro, this conversation did very well. But, when their work was done, Bernicia said:

"I am not interested in these dead gentlemen. Pray, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

"I have first to complain of you. When I came to meet you with my hands outstretched and my heart in them, you gave me a courtesy."

"You ought to be grateful. I do not courtesy to many people. My hands were busy, as you could see, spreading out my skirts. Could I give them to you and spoil a reverence?"

"You ought to have given them to me. Surely you owe me some show of love, Bernicia!"

"Such show of love as I *owe*, you may put among your desperate debts. Nothing vexes me more than to pay what I owe."

"Give me a little love, then. I am hungering for it."

They were close to the door of the large parlour as he spoke, and George opened it and led her to a seat. Then he drew up the window blinds and let the red rays of the setting sun flood with their glory the splendour of the carved and gilded woods, the fine damasks, the pictures, the china, and the curios.

"What a magnificent room this is!" cried Bernicia.

"'Tis but the frame to the fairest picture in the world when you are in it. Queen of my heart! I love you!"

"Others also say that, cousin."

"*Cousin* me not. You have already called me 'George,' and you shall not go back a letter of it. Say George!"

And there was something about the order that she could not resist. The two words marched into her heart and conquered it. She trembled, she sighed, she said "George." And then he kissed her.

It was the first love kiss Bernicia had received.

It was the first love kiss George had given. For a moment there was a divine silence between them. Bernicia was rosy and then white as the roses at her breast. George's bending face was transfigured by an unspeakable transport, and he laughed softly in his rapture—a rippling, joyful laugh, such as comes only from the pure in heart when their bliss is beyond earth's syllables.

Then he talked with her as lovers have talked ever since the world began. Wonderful words! Foolish words. The eloquence of children and of angels! It was their moment of paradise. George was newly created, and he had just found his Eve. And Bernicia listened as Eve had listened. The song was a new song on George's lips. The story was made for her. It was as if kisses were a thing of George's invention. They spoke low. They forgot to speak. Bernicia surrendered her hand to her lover; she surrendered also her will, for, whenever she said "We must go back to Claire," he answered "No, we will stay here a little longer." And she stayed.

It was not until he ventured on the word "wife" that he frightened her. Then she rose and shook her head positively.

"You have spoiled all, George," she said, in a pet. "Why could you not be content? Why did you say 'wife'?"

"'Tis a sweet word, my dear one."

"'Tis a shrill word, a penetrating word, a word of power. I will not listen to it. Call me 'love,' not 'wife.'"

"By all that is good and true, you have given me a promise."

"Then it was an inconsiderate promise. I am sorry I gave it, if I did give it. Come, let us go to madame and Claire."

"But I hope, Bernicia——"

"Hope! Yes. I have had lovers who have built castles upon hope. Hope is no foundation."

"Dearest! sweetest! most adorable Bernicia!"

Then she smiled again and submitted, and slowly, very slowly, step by step, they went back to the parlour.

It was draped in the same gray twilight as the room they had left. No one had thought of candles, for both madame and Claire had become oblivious of their immediate surroundings, while listening to the outpouring of the tragic young life beside them. They were sitting close to a window, and Harry, with the ineffable look of youth in his glooming and glowing countenance, was telling the story of his sorrows, his disappointments, and his sufferings. Claire's face was lifted to his full of compassion, and madame, listening with all her heart, was not aware that she was crushing between her fingers the stems of the flowering musk, though this waste of its cool, subtle fragrance filled the room like the very breath of heaven.

"I have troubled you," said Harry, as George and Bernicia joined them. "And why should I? Nothing is ever given back to the moment that has struck. My past I can never redeem. But as you see, grandmother, I have been a bond slave to ideas and prejudices which I received at my birth. When misfortune taught me how to think, and the breaking of all my idols taught me how to feel, then I understood

that political truths are only truths of periods, and that a mental and moral slavery to dead ideas is as real a slavery as a physical one."

Madame rose to her feet. In the gray twilight her tall figure had great majesty, as she said in her soft, resolute speech :

"Children ! All slavery, whether it be spiritual, mental, or physical, is a violation of nature. We are all born to die. But none of us is born to be a slave !"

CHAPTER VI.

LOVER AND PREACHER.

WHEN Bernicia returned home, she found the household in a hurry of preparation for the country. With an explanatory wave of the hand, Lady Pomfret drew Bernicia's attention to the maids and men packing and cording the little hair-covered trunks, and then, taking her into an adjoining room, she asked impatiently :

"Where is Harry ? Did he see grandmother ? And what success had he with her ?"

"Harry will remain in Bloomsbury until something can be done in his affairs. Sink or swim, grandmother will stand by him, of that I am sure. Harry went straight to her heart, and she already thinks mountains and miracles of him."

"And was Uncle William as easily charmed !"

"At the first he was merely courteous, but after a night's reflection he was also generous. He charged me to tell you, if gold were necessary to Harry's safety, he would be responsible for any reasonable sum."

"Indeed gold is the first and the last necessity. Lord Pomfret will have to work Harry's affairs with the purse open in his hand."

"Have you then engaged Lord Pomfret's assistance ? How did you manage it ?"

"We dined *tête-à-tête* last night. He told me in advance that he had made a vow not to let any Stuart

business touch his integrity to the Hanover people. Before his first bottle was finished he had promised me all my desires. Ah, Bernicia, what is integrity to fascination?"

"And pray how will he work the business?"

"Through Lord Rashleigh. Your lover's jealous mistake is a most lucky event. It enchanted Lord John. He laughed himself into the most obliging humour about it. And I assure you I acted the little play for him in a very diverting manner."

"I have no doubt you did. You spare no one in such diversions, Fanny."

"My dear, I did you no injury, and I did Harry a world of good. You must know that Rashleigh's high bred air and flashing black eyes are much admired by the great countess. He has only to bet her a thousand guineas that *she cannot* get Harry a pardon and the thing is done. When she touches the money, Harry will get the king's grace."

"Has she such influence at court?"

"The king is on his knees to her, and she can be bought at every point. If Lord Rashleigh then will manage the German woman, she in turn will manage the king. The way is clear enough."

"'Tis a dirty way, and a way without honour. I vow grandmother had a better thought."

"Then let us have it, by all means."

"She would have us go direct to Mr. Whitefield. He is said to be omnipotent with the Countess of Chesterfield, who is the king's sister, and very able to move him to mercy. And surely it is better the king should know Harry through the saintly Chesterfield, than through such a sinner as the German countess."

"What simpleton has told you that the king knows saints from sinners? He is sentimental, or he is gross. When he is sentimental he weeps, and the Chesterfield or the preacher might perhaps touch him. When he is gross, and in general he is gross, the German does her will with him. Grandmother's way is the way of the angels, and she would need the Archangel Michael to go before her. Such hopes are fantastical. But Uncle William's offer is the length and breadth of intelligence. *He* has wit enough to know that the purse is stronger than the preacher."

"But how provoking are these probabilities and delays. I am with Harry, who would gladly see the king and speak for himself."

"Harry is yet so young that he believes nothing is impossible to him. It galls his pride to take favours, but he must take them or be ruined. And you complain of probabilities and delays, yet I tell you frankly, Bernicia, that uncertainty and expectation are among the very joys of life."

"Well, then, so much for Harry at the present. He is comfortably bestowed for a week or two, and I see that you are packing your wardrobe. Now tell me for what reason?"

"We are going to the country. Captain Wildermere has lent us his villa at Richmond. I suppose it was on the cards. He is said to sleep with them in his hands."

"How wicked we all are, Fanny!"

"I dare say that Piccadilly and the Mall are very like what the fashionable streets in Sodom and Tyre and Sidon were. My dear, we should rattle the dice, and go to races and balls, if fire or the French were

at our doors. That is what Mr. Walpole thinks, and he has a very observing mind. But good or bad, we must live in some way, and simplicity and the country are now the fashion. Tell Tasset to pack your fineries ; we shall send the trunks and some of the servants to-morrow, and follow them at our convenience."

"Have we any engagement for to-night?"

"Oh, you may be certain that as the house is topsy-turvy, and the servants out of their wits and tempers, Lord John will bring home company to dinner. So make yourself handsome and agreeable for Harry's sake."

Nothing further was said, but Bernicia understood that Lord Rashleigh would be of the company, and if so, that he would find opportunity to make a thousand apologies and protestations. And though, as she told herself, the man was hateful to her, and not to be thought of as a lover, she had the feminine desire to look aggravatingly lovely in his presence. So she put on the snowy Indian mull which Rashleigh vowed made her most ravishing. Her charming face, her shining eyes, her waving hair, her tall and slender form, and the glint of gems on her white arms and throat, made her so bewitchingly attractive that when Rashleigh entered the room he was speechless with admiration.

Bernicia was alone. She was leaning against an open window, idly fingering a spray of honeysuckle which encircled it, and the room was full of its fragrance and of her beauty. The young nobleman was beside himself with love for her, but she did not lift her eyes from the honeysuckle spray, nor did she by either smile or word encourage her penitent suitor.

He gazed at her until his heart burned, and then the next moment he was kneeling at her feet. The act was spontaneous and natural. He had not intended it, and he was not able to avoid it. His great love forced him to his knees, and in that attitude he found the words he wished to say. He made no apologies for his mistake, nor yet for his bad temper, he laid everything to the master passion that ruled him. He said he was mad with jealousy, and was not sorry for it. Brother or lover, all men were hateful to him who won from her the smiles and words he was dying for.

"If you will not love me, Bernicia Cresswell," he cried, "then bid me die at your feet. My sword will not hurt as cruelly as your disdain."

The words were living words, full of the might of truth, and Bernicia could not avoid looking at the speaker. He was handsome, he was graceful, he was in very earnest, but she was annoyed, and there was a tone of anger in her voice as she answered :

"Stand up, Lord Rashleigh ! I am not to be woo'd in any such fashion. Give me your arm and we will take a stroll in the garden."

He did as he was told, but his manner was that of a man both injured and offended. As they walked one length of the flagged avenue skirting the house, he remained silent, looking straight before him, and giving Bernicia no aid whatever in her purpose to change the conversation. Indeed, he preserved intact the attitude of a man waiting for an answer.

His silent persistence vexed Bernicia. She thought he might have understood her reluctance to be suddenly pinned down to a promise and a position. The silence made a demand, it claimed something, it

irritated her, and as they turned backward she broke its spell with a pettish assertion that "the wind was chill and the dust blowing, and that she would go back to the house."

"But you will answer me first, Miss Cresswell. Indeed, you will."

"Then it must be a put-off, sir. I am shivery ; I am ill at ease, and my thoughts are with others. I have little mind to talk at present, except it be about my brother Harry."

"I have already discussed his affairs with Lord Pomfret, and pledged my utmost ability in his behalf."

"Why did you not tell me so much before ? I would have thanked you most feelingly for the news."

"Your gratitude is not what I ask for ; I am dying for your love, and nothing less will content me." Then suddenly he took both her hands in his own, and said, "You shall not leave until you say some sensible word to me. May I love you with any hope of return?"

She made an effort to withdraw her hands, but the grasp was too firm, and she said with some temper :

"I am not to be forced into a promise. Give me my hands. Under compulsion, I will not say one kind word."

"Oh, Bernicia ! Oh, little proud, wild heart ! I will win, or I will die for you !"

Then he kissed her hands, and let them fall, and Bernicia looked with pretended pity at the marks his grasp had left. But there was something in this mastery that pleased her. She walked slowly at Rashleigh's side, and his ardent glances stole softly into her consciousness. He made her no compli-

ments, and she liked him for the omission. She was no vain girl to be caught with a few silly words. As they approached the door, she heard Lord Pomfret's voice, and she said :

"I am sure that my brother has visitors with him. Our conversation is not for the public. Let us talk of the new play, or the weather, or the prince, or the preacher, or anything that is common and general."

Suiting her actions to her words, she advanced to meet the gay company who had accompanied Lord Pomfret home. The party was immediately joined by Lady Pomfret, then dinner was served, and the hours went by in eating and health-drinking, and in much conversation that was both witty and scandalous. Cards, music, and a minuet followed, but Bernicia was restless and not very happy. She watched Lord Rashleigh in a critical temper, and yet found much to admire that she had not before observed. He was indeed slighter and shorter than George Abney, and his face and manner lacked entirely the placid strength and beauty which distinguished the young citizen. On the contrary Rashleigh's countenance was dark, thin, and full of passionate expressions ; and his manner reckless and authoritative. But as the players sat at the tables, Bernicia watched his careless extravagance with an angry admiration. He dealt with indifference, he staked with still greater indifference, he lost continually with a levity that was not good nature. She blamed herself for his imprudences, and her anger turned to pity, and she said at the close of a game :

"My lord, what say you to a minuet ? My sister will play us the measure."

Lady Pomfret was very willing, and Rashleigh was in a mood to excel himself. He danced to perfection, and piqued Bernicia into an equal enthusiasm ; so that the company gradually left the tables to watch the graceful movements and courtesies of the dancers. And after this concession, it was impossible for Rashleigh to maintain his attitude of reckless offence. He said to himself that he had chosen an ill hour, and must now wait for a better opportunity. And as men like a scapegoat for their mistakes, he laid the blame of his imprudence upon Harry Cresswell. "He drove me into a fever of jealousy, and made me look and say a score of foolish things ; yet I have promised to secure a pardon for him, if the thing can be brought to pass through woman or gold. 'Tis a thousand pities I am so easy-tempered." Thus he thought, and thus he tried to comfort his wounded self-esteem.

Lady Pomfret was sure Lord Rashleigh could compass Harry's pardon, but Bernicia had little faith in him.

"A bad woman and the king's temper are as unreliable things to build hope on as can be," she said, "and Harry's pardon by such means is as dubious as possible."

"It is obvious as possible," reiterated Lady Pomfret.

"Very well ; your cry is '*Obvious ! obvious !*' and mine is '*Dubious ! dubious !*' Between Rashleigh and the countess and the king, I have no doubt the affair will fluctuate until it is exceedingly tiresome, and we are all weary of it."

"You are in a discontented mood, miss, and no one can pleasure you. To-morrow you must say your

'farewells' in Bloomsbury, and I hope the people there may content you better. However, as I am resolved to go to Richmond in the afternoon, you will return home early in the day, I hope."

Bernicia's visit to Bloomsbury was important, not only as a matter of courtesy to her relatives, but she was also to carry a letter from Lord Pomfret to William Bouverie, and to inform Harry of the movements to be made in his favour. Madame heard them with extreme disapprobation. Harry had become dear to her, and she could not endure that he should owe his pardon to the blandishments of a wanton.

"There is some better way," she said positively. "Such a plan is wickedness itself. Will you take the king's grace, Harry, through the hands of the flesh and the devil?"

The young man hesitated. "If a prisoner is seeking life and liberty," he said, "he cares not what hands open his prison door." Then he rose from Claire's side and began to argue on the expediency of accepting such opportunities as fortune provided. He spoke well, and Bernicia nodded assent to some of his assertions, and Claire sighed at their sinful reasonableness; but madame was not to be convinced.

"If I were but a spectator in the matter," she answered, "I could frown, and jog my foot, and say 'How wicked are people grown!' and so send the subject out of my thoughts; but in this case I have a responsibility, and such airs will not do with my own conscience. But I must believe that there are good people who will show mercy for God's sake, as well as wicked people who will sell it for gold or lust."

After this she relapsed into silence and thought, and

the young people sat by one of the open windows, and talked softly of a great many things. Bernicia described the dinner of the previous evening, the play and the minuet, and, generally speaking, usurped the conversation. But her eyes were as busy as her tongue, and she noticed that Harry heard little that was said, and that he was wholly absorbed in Claire, who seemed to have put on a new nature. And in a measure this was true, for Claire had hitherto been like a flower partially opened, with some leaves yet asleep at its roots, and some petals yet folded in bud. Suddenly a breath of love had blown buds and leaves to perfection. Bernicia was astonished at the change. She could not help saying to herself, "How exquisite she is ! What holy fantasies are in her eyes ! What an air of sweet austerity is around her ! She is an angel, both inside and out."

No one spoke of George, and Bernicia was too conscious of her interest in him to do so. Harry was thinking of Claire; Claire thinking only of Harry, and to madame, George Abney had never been an object of affection, nor even of much solicitude. But the omission finally irritated Bernicia, and she said testily :

"I shall go to your room and rest a little, Claire. I think you and Harry can make shift to do without me." And she looked at Claire and Harry, and coughed behind her fan in a way that covered Claire with blushes, and made her rise hastily, saying :

"Indeed, I shall go with you, Bernicia. I also think that Harry can make shift to do without me."

When they had reached Claire's room Bernicia threw herself on a lounge with an impatient manner.

"What a tiresome morning it has been !" she cried.

"I hate to be in a company where nobody thinks of me."

"You are always in my mind, Bernicia."

"With all the good temper in the world, I say that I was out of everyone's consideration. You thought only of Harry, and grandmother thought only of Harry, and Harry thought only of you. You have a most celestial way with Harry, but trust me, it is one that will bring you into scrapes, miss, sooner or later."

"And you have a way with me, that would be very wounding, if I did not know how little it meant. I was simply listening to Harry's opinions. I am sure you also agreed with them."

"I have no objection to his opinions, except that in general they overturn my own. At present I am for the country and a sleep. I shall let everything go for a seven days or so."

"But about Harry's pardon—what is to be done?"

"Whenever I come to the pass of *what is to be done*, I answer, *nothing*."

"But Harry's affairs can hardly wait."

"I trust I am more prudent than to be doing, whether events favour or not. I can wait for the little god, Opportunity. I am so tired of hearing nothing but Harry! For a change, let me ask you where is George? I came early this morning, hoping to see him, and lo! and behold! he is invisible and apparently unmentionable."

"No one has seen George this morning, and the reason is very natural. Uncle had two great ships leaving at midnight for the Baltic and the Spanish seas, and George was necessary. After their depart-

ure he would sleep at his inn, and so to business this morning from there. Had he known you were here, we might certainly have counted on his presence, for you have a way with George, that makes him very much your servant. I hope truly it may bring you happiness and keep you out of scrapes."

"Claire, you are a mean little sinner to give me my words back so uncharitably. Do you wish to heap coals of fire on my head? And if so, what do you think of deviating into the right for a wrong reason? Is it not very like doing evil that good may come? Fanny told me to invite you to visit us at Richmond. Shall I not come in for you next week?"

"If madame will consent. You know already that it is always pleasant for me to be with you."

"I have also an invitation for George."

"Does Lady Pomfret indeed care to see my brother again?"

"She has but one cry against him, that he is a born Dissenter, the only fault he cannot possibly correct."

"Indeed, George is very little of a bigot. When he was talking with uncle about Harry, he said, 'Sir, I should as soon expect every man to be of my height and complexion as of my views and opinions.'"

"What a tiresome subject we have fallen upon! Let us talk of dress and lovers and such trifles. I am in no mood to be serious, and I wish that George were here to sing with me, or quarrel with me, for I am tired of conversation that has a purpose."

In this assertion Bernicia was flatly denying her actual temper. She was anxious about Harry, troubled about Lord Rashleigh, uncertain about her feeling for George Abney, disgusted with the frivolities

of her life, and yet afraid of the realities of a wiser one. Her emotions were so complex that she could not understand them, and she suffered from that weary depression which always accompanies our inabilities in any direction.

She saw George at dinner, but the meeting was a disappointment. He was strangely preoccupied ; he was even restless, a condition quite at variance with his character and habits. At the table he spoke seldom, but he frequently laid down his knife and fork with a sudden action that compelled the attention of all present. Bernicia felt that for some reason she had ceased to command his thoughts, that indeed some transcendent interest had taken possession of his mind, and she was piqued and curious about the change. But George said nothing in explanation until the cloth was drawn and the servants had left the room. Then he rose to his feet, his face shone, his eyes filled with tears, his whole person radiated the intensity of his feeling. All were attracted by his appearance, and William Bouverie said :

"I see that you have something to tell us, George. What have you heard ? Where have you been ?"

"I went this morning to Moorfields, sir. I went to Moorfields, and Mr. Whitefield took me to Calvary. And I have heard the voice of the Lord like a cry at midnight, startling the sleeping world. Oh, sir ! I can never be the same man again !"

"I hope then, George, you will be a better man," said William Bouverie. "Pray what took you to Moorfields ?"

"You know, sir, that I was at the wharves until the ships sailed. And my heart was full of them. They

seemed to me like living creatures bound on great adventures ; and when they slipped their anchors, I lifted my hat to their captains and men, and was much affected. The silence and the night, the wind and the tide, and many other things made my heart swell ; and I reached my inn very little inclined to sleep. After two or three restless hours I heard the continuous tread of feet, and I went to the window and opened it. Then I saw great numbers of poor folk going in one direction. It was not near the dawning, and some who had come from far off had still their lighted lanterns in their hands. I said to myself on the instant, these people are going to hear George Whitefield preach. For you must know that his first sermon at the dawn is only heard by watermen and river-traders, hawkers and market folk, and such as have no time later on in the day. So I went with them, and I heard a sermon in market language—a sermon that a little child could have understood, that an apostle might have preached.”

William Bouverie played with his watch chain and seals, and looked down, but madame said in a tone of expectancy, “Well, then, George Abney, tell us what you saw and heard?”

“When I reached Moorfields,” continued George, “there were at least three thousand people present. It was not quite dawn, and all the common was gray and dewy. There was the murmur of the multitude, but so little rude noise that I heard the crowing of the cocks in the far-off solitary farmhouses. Whitefield’s whole figure was visible, and the great congregation stood before him. His white surplice fell to his feet ; his beaming face shone in the dim light ; his

arms were uplifted, and in his right hand he held a small open Bible, as he cried, '*Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden!*' And his wonderful voice, sweet and strong as an angel's, thrilled the air above, and the hearts below. 'It is Jesus Christ who asks you to come to him,' he continued, 'because he knows what it is to be hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and friendless, and homeless. Are you poor? Jesus had not where to lay his head. Are you weary? Jesus fainted under his Cross. Are you wronged by those who ought to love you? Jesus was sold by Judas, and denied by Peter, and his own brethren thought him mad.' The enthusiasm of Heaven was in every word, his soul burned as he entreated and persuaded. He took us to Gethsemane, and led us up the hill Calvary. He drew apart the curtains which veil eternity, and showed us the despairs of the lost, and the ineffable happiness of the saved. He stretched out his arms as if he would gather the multitude within them, and said that so were the arms of Christ outstretched upon the Cross, that he might draw all men unto him. And when at last he cried out, 'Let us with angels and archangels, and with the whole company of heaven, come to the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, who taketh away the sins of the world,' there was no necessity to bid us kneel or bid us pray. We were all on our knees. We were all praying. As the preacher finished, the first rays of the rising sun fell over him, and his white raiment shone in the light, and he blessed us there. Then the men and women went away to their work on the river, and in the streets, and though most of them were weeping, they were

such tears as God brings out of his sanctuary and wipes away with his own hand."

"And were you weeping, cousin?" asked Bernicia.

"Indeed," answered George, "I had an inexpressible anguish and sadness when I looked on these weary ones with their wan faces and reddened eyelids, and thought of the multitudes who, even in this England, know not of Christ. And all other things seemed insignificant to me at that hour, and I longed for the tongue of an angel that I might preach the everlasting Gospel."

"God puts each man in his proper place, George. That is his work, it is not ours," said William Bouverie. "And I say truly," he continued, "that I do not altogether approve of these Methodists. Mr. Whitefield and the Wesleys, and others of the same persuasion, are ordained clergymen of the Church of England. There are plenty of churches to preach in; and this hedge and highway preaching is likely to degrade holy things."

"Son William," said madame, "Mr. Whitefield has precedents. Jesus Christ preached in the fields and highways. Peter preached in the house of Cornelius; and St. Paul preached a great sermon on Mars Hill."

"Let us not dispute further, mother. We can talk ourselves into error. But I will say that men who are neither Churchmen nor Dissenters are suspicious. If Episcopacy is too narrow for them, surely Dissent is wide enough."

"Methodism and Dissent are radically different, sir," said George.

"Then, George, Methodism is very likely radically in the wrong."

"I think not, sir. The quarrel of Dissent with the Church is with its government ; the quarrel of Methodism is with its atheism and want of living religion ; with——"

"'Tis no matter, George. We are neither Luthers nor Calvins. And, 'tis said, these Methodists are already quarrelling among themselves. Whitefield is crying 'Calvin' and Wesley 'Arminius,' and so it goes. Public opinion is greatly against them."

"Indeed, son William," said madame, "I give little for public opinion in matters of religion. Public opinion was with Pilate, and against Christ ; with the world, and against the apostles ; and so it ever is. If these Methodists are of God, he will approve them ; and if not, they will quickly vanish away."

"I assure you, sir," said George, "that God yet speaks to mortal man. Both Churchmen and Dissenters may scorn this little company of preachers, but glorious things shall yet be spoken of them ; for I heard this morning the shout of a King in the Methodist camp."

He spoke with a passion of conviction that was independent of either the sympathy or indifference of his audience. For he was seeing—not *with*, but *through* his eyes—things invisible : the kneeling, weeping multitude at the feet of the seraphic preacher adjuring angels and archangels, and the whole company of heaven, to lead them to the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, who taketh away the sins of the world.

Yet it was only madame and Claire who in any measure entered into his feelings. William Bouverie was annoyed, and he said in a tone of finality : "'Tis

a subject we are none of us ready to be judges on." And with these words he rose and went to his private room. Then Harry, whose curiosity was aroused, began to question madame, and George tried to draw Bernicia into the privacy of the state parlour. But never had she been so unreasonable. She made a mock, not only of her own feelings, but of every other person's, and she vowed that "George Abney could speak of things of no signification with more importance than any other man." Then as she felt herself to be nearer tears than laughter she became contradictory and even cross. George was patient, because love understands and can therefore wait; yet her bad temper bit at both ends and all along the line, and she made herself as miserable as she made her lover. Indeed, everyone in the room was growing irritable, when Bernicia finally said :

"I have listened to all kinds of disagreeable opinions with as much patience as any Christian could, but now, if you will excuse my presence, I shall put my eyes and ears to sleep. To-morrow we go to Richmond, and Fanny expects me early."

"To-morrow!" cried madame. "To-morrow is Saturday. You cannot possibly get into any order before the Sabbath day."

"Well, grandmother, Fanny has no partiality for the Sabbath day; and, to be sure, it is a poor thing to put all our religion into one favourite day, as if the other six had no souls to save."

"That must be one of Mr. Walpole's smart sayings," replied madame, with much anger; "for wits never think they are great wits until they laugh at things too holy for them to name."

"Then I beg your pardon for Mr. Walpole, grandmother. Whom shall we talk of? The wit is too bad, and the preacher is too good."

"Bernicia," said George, as he lifted her hand, "I have a strange thing to tell you about the preacher."

"I will not hear another word about him, sir," and she withdrew her hand in a manner to emphasise her refusal.

"But I have heard you say that you wished to know all that concerned the Moorfields service."

"I have said many foolish things, and besides, you have quite satisfied me. I now see plainly that the early-morning Methodists have the best of it. Mr. Whitefield keeps all his good promises for the hawkers, and watermen, and servant maids. For sinners of the court and the quality he has nothing but the devil and his dwelling-place. So you see, all of you, that there is one Gospel for Park Street and another Gospel for Moorfields. So much for Mr. Whitefield. I will have no more of him," and so with a courtesy to madame she left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

WILLIAM BOUVERIE'S ANGER.

ONE morning in the following July George Whitefield was sitting motionless in his lodging. The physical man was weary, and the nobler man within the physical man was sorrowful from standing in the shadow of unnatural death. On the Edgeware Road at the dawn he had preached Christ to many thousand souls, and coming back, full of the rapture of his theme, had met a little congregation impossible to pass. It was a thief going to Tyburn,—that melancholy old place of execution,—a thief sitting on his coffin with the hangman smoking his pipe beside him, and the javelin men surrounding the cart, and a ribald crowd following after. Under the gallows, standing by the thief's side, Whitefield had spoken to this congregation of God's gathering, like an immortal pleading with immortals, until its cruel mirth had been hushed in tears, and the poor soul, ready to perish, had gone trusting and praying into the great darkness.

But his hour was now over, and he sat like a prophet who has delivered his message, and who feels all the weakness and limitations of his humanity. The scene through which he had just passed made him exceedingly sorrowful; the trembling criminal, the indifferent officials, the brutal savages of civilisation pressed hopelessly upon his consciousness, and

he sat dumbly quiet under their influence. But spiritual reaction in Whitefield's case was generally rapid ; he soon remembered how, with the Gospel on his lips, he had moved these outcasts to tears and prayer ; and his face grew luminous, and his eyes beamed, and with a radiant smile he rose to his feet, saying confidently : " Thank God, it is not George Whitefield ! it is Jesus Christ, and he is sufficient."

At this moment the door of the room opened, and he turned his face toward it. Madame Bouverie and her grandson entered, madame leaning on Harry's arm. Whitefield understood at a glance that his visitors were not of the ordinary sort, and madame's perceptions were equally clear. She said to herself instantly, " This is one of the sons of God." For Whitefield had turned to her with all the enthusiasm of his last reflection lighting his countenance, and his tall, graceful, beautiful presence, his frank, easy carriage, his holy eyes, his tuneful voice, made him the very realisation of a young prophet. Madame was also much impressed by the exquisite purity and neatness of his attire, and by the spotless order of his room, and for a moment she was silent. But as Whitefield led her to his own chair, she said, ere she sat down :

" Mr. Whitefield, I am the widow of Nicholas Bouverie, and this is my grandson, Sir Harry Cresswell."

" The name of Nicholas Bouverie is well known to me," answered Whitefield. " It is well known to all who honour large charity, wisely bestowed."

" Among the Dissenters it is indeed honoured, sir."

Whitefield smiled happily. " Among all who call themselves after Christ," he said. " Charity is above

creed. Charity cares nothing for the penfoldings which sects hold so precious. I am glad to see your face. In what way can I be your servant?"

"Sir, in a matter of life and death. My grandson is under a bill of attainder and outlawry. He is even in your presence at the peril of his life."

Then Whitefield looked steadily at the young man, and Harry returned his gaze with a smiling confidence. The next moment they had clasped hands. The act came before the thought, but both men were satisfied with it.

"Your grandson is, then, one of Charles Stuart's victims," said Whitefield, and he grasped the situation with a clearness and rapidity that left madame little to explain. Yet, in that direct language which was part of her character, she told, without excuses and without comments, the story of Harry's mistaken life. Whitefield was much affected by it. "Sir Harry's fault," he answered, "was committed while he was but a boy, and it was really a question of obedience to his father or of treason to King George. There are many who would say a son at sixteen years of age should obey his father rather than honour the king."

"Sir," said Harry, "I have been with Charles Stuart since my majority, and so have sanctioned the treason of my boyhood."

"My fault!" interrupted madame. "My fault entirely. The lad was without friends or money, and I, who ought to have long ago devised means to bring home my banished boy, thought neither of his sufferings nor of his necessities."

"But, in this matter, how can I help you?" asked Whitefield. "I go into the king's closet with the

Word of the Lord. I can carry with it no meaner message. I am a preacher, and no courtier."

"True," answered madame. "But Lady Chesterfield is a courtier. She is the king's sister, and her words are very weighty with him."

"And you think that I can persuade Lady Chesterfield to plead Sir Harry Cresswell's cause?"

"We think you can, if you will consent to do so."

"I will. I will see her this afternoon. What can Sir Harry Cresswell do for himself?"

"Nothing."

"What can you do for him?"

"I have no worldly influence that can be of service. I can but pray."

"Well, madame, we fight and fail; we work and lose our labour; we reason, and no one believes our report; but the praying legions were never yet known to yield. Prayer is heaven-besieging and heaven-opening."

"I am too weak for such prayer. My heart is a nest of doubts and fears."

"That is the devil. Let him do his worst! He is only a mastiff chained."

"Alas, that his chain is so long! He has worried and barked all over and all through my life, sir."

"It is his use and wont. Good Bishop Bunyan's Pilgrim found him straddling over the whole breadth of the way; but, nevertheless, he was no match for Christian. Strengthen yourself in the Lord. This afternoon I will begin suit for Sir Harry's full pardon and release."

"And if God's mercy fail not, you will obtain it."

"It never fails. The end of one mercy is the

beginning of another, or we should be undone. You shall hear soon from me, madame," and then he looked at Harry and said :

"Happy are they who can turn their double suffering to double praise. While you are yet young, sir, take straight steps and stand, a man, in your grandfather's place." And, as he held the youth's hand, one all-conquering glance of truth drew their hearts together.

In promising to move that afternoon in Harry's affairs, Whitefield had not spoken inconsiderately. He knew there was to be a religious meeting at Lady Huntington's, and that Lady Chesterfield would be present. When her heart was humble before a God she had offended, and tender in the sense of his forgiveness, it would surely be a good hour to induce her to ask mercy for Harry Cresswell. The political side of the question seemed of small importance to Whitefield, for whatever he did, he did for eternity ; and its vastness absorbed his perceptions of the "things that are seen." It was not as an adherent of either Charles Stuart or King George that he regarded Harry, but as a hopeful young soldier of the King of kings. Saved from the scaffold, inheriting the religious tendencies of one side of his family and the chivalrous self-sacrifice of the other, what great things might not be hoped from a youth who had been tempered in such stormy and sorrowful scenes !

It was thus he pleaded Harry's cause with Lady Chesterfield, and she could not resist his eloquence. All her arguments, all her reluctances melted away in the fervent heat of Whitefield's advocacy, though she said, with a touch of irritability : "It is useless to

reason longer with you, Mr. Whitefield, for in your mind the world above has so completely displaced the world below that you never take into account the things that relate to this life, nor have you any fitness for it."

Broad as was this assertion, it was practically true. The fret and folly of the court, the anger or pleasure of the king, were things George Whitefield did not take into account. It appeared to him a heavenly thing to show mercy, and he supposed George II. would be glad of a wise opportunity to do so. It was not indeed of intent, but of that unconscious wisdom which is common to children and good men, that he finally said the few words which decided Lady Chesterfield. They related to Madame Bouverie's dead husband, and to his munificent gifts to the city of London.

At the mention of these things, Lady Chesterfield tapped her left hand approvingly with her right, and a smile of encouragement lighted up her grave, strong face. She saw at once the importance of this information, for she knew the king was anxious to please the Dissenters, and that he would not be likely to slight any good opportunity to conciliate so large and powerful a body of his subjects.

"This good Nicholas Bouverie," she answered, "will be of great service to his grandson. I think, indeed, Mr. Whitefield, that he and you and I are sufficient to obtain His Majesty's grace. For he is in a religious mind at present, and also very favourable to you, sir. Let me tell you, however, that the less said about the Stuarts the better."

"I do not think that the young man has any love

or respect left for the Stuarts. He does not desire to speak of them."

"Oh, indeed, I know not. It is plain to me that even the most sober-minded Englishmen dream as Jacobites, though they may act as Hanoverians."

Moved by this reflection, Lady Chesterfield for a moment half repented herself of the promise she had made, and Whitefield understood that the subject could not be wisely continued. He therefore turned the conversation to the right of sanctuary in Westminster, and was warmly advocating its proposed abolition when Lady Huntington joined them. Then there was a dish of tea, and a hymn sung, and the preacher walked slowly in the summer twilight back to his lodging.

He was doubtful of the ultimate success of his intercession. Lady Chesterfield had manifested some weariness and impatience, and he hardly dared to hope the king would accept the loyalty of the Bouveries as security for the allegiance of the Cresswells. The uncertainty of the affair depressed him as he passed through the dim streets, but when he reached his own room there were candles burning on the table, and their light fell upon the white pages of his Bible. Then he smiled at his fears, and he sat down and laid his hand broadly across the open book. It was an actual and tangible reassurance to him.

"My Lady Chesterfield was soon weary of poor Cresswell's affairs," he said, "but I cannot weary the Great Advocate. It was not to the anxious and sorrowful *he* forbade 'repetitions.' She counted back also to the sins of the young man's fathers, but God never yet said to a suppliant, 'Whose son art thou?'

So then, I will venture all on God, for he is sufficient for all."

Humanity, however, is capable of giving us agreeable surprises. On the third day after this interview, Whitefield received the following letter from Lady Chesterfield :

DEAR MR. WHITEFIELD :

The king has listened very graciously to my entreaties regarding young Cresswell ; and instructions to set aside the bill of attainder against him have been sent to the secretary on such affairs. But it will be well to have the king's grace publicly confirmed by Cresswell's personal homage to His Majesty ; therefore bring him to-morrow to St. James's Palace about the hour of noon. Colonel Lacy has promised to meet you at the brick gateway, and to be your introduction to the presence chamber. I shall enter with the king, and you may rely on my seconding any reasonable advances, for you must understand, sir, that as regards Cresswell's estate, much will depend upon this interview. I hear there is but bad news from Ashley, and that Lady Huntington has gone there in haste.

Remember in your prayers,

Your willing servant, for Christ's sake,

MELUSINA CHESTERFIELD.

This letter was put into Whitefield's hand just as he was preparing to go to Kennington Common, but he hastily wrote some further instructions to Harry and sent them by a messenger. Then in a kind of exaltation he hastened to his appointment. Thousands were sitting on the grass waiting for his words, and he stood up in their midst and spoke until the twilight and the moonlight blended. In that mystical glow his tall, impassioned figure realised every conception of a man of God, as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,

until he was borne away with his hearers in one deep flood of rapturous adoration.

In Bloomsbury Square Lady Chesterfield's letter did not find such favourable conditions. William Bouverie was in his private room ; Claire visiting a maid who was sick in the upper part of the house ; and George Abney just leaving for a debating society of which he was a member. Harry accompanied him to the door, and then stood a while on the upper step, looking wistfully into the world. He was thinking how much better it might be to throw all the past behind him and begin life anew in the American colonies, when Whitefield's messenger gave him the letter. He read it, and to his own great amazement felt no elation ; but rather a composure that was almost indifference. The mood was a natural reaction, but he did not understand it in this light ; he simply wondered at his sudden depression, and then hastened to the parlour to tell the news to madame.

Madame also had a letter in her hand. It was from Bernicia ; and the girl had enclosed in it a few stars of woodruff. Their delicious perfume was a delight to madame, and she was fingering the dainty stems with a smile as Harry approached her. Ere she could speak he was at her knees reading to her the happy words. Then she clasped his face between her hands and kissed him ; and the woodruff stars dropped from her fingers, but their heavenly fragrance scented the memory of those moments forever.

At madame's age, however, joy wearies, even while it exhilarates, and she soon felt a longing for that solitude where only God is ; so Harry was left alone in the dim parlour with his good news. It was

not until Claire returned to the room that he realised how great a part she had in his anxieties and hopes. Claire had been latterly shy and reserved, and Harry's dreams of the American colonies had been far more induced by this fact than by the uncertainties of his position. When she perceived that madame had retired she became instantly fluttered and nervous ; and, with some remark about a lost thimble, was going to leave the room again. But Harry intercepted her. He showed her the letters from Lady Chesterfield and George Whitefield, and without further explanations said :

"The king has pardoned me ! I am to see him to-morrow. Oh, Claire ! Claire ! the king may give me life, but you alone can make life worth living. Claire, speak to me. Say one word and I will fall at your feet ! Do not go away from me. Sweet Claire ! say one word, or my joy will be turned into sorrow."

She stood before him, blushing and trembling ; a little woman transfigured by an emotion she scarcely dared to acknowledge ; and too shy to lift the love-lit eyes that would else have betrayed her secret. Sweetly silent, yet tremulous with a rapture never felt before, she must speedily have yielded a confession to Harry's exigent importunity had not William Bouverie interrupted his suit. He came in for the usual evening prayers, his mind still struggling with the worldly matters he was trying to forget. A glance at Harry and Claire was sufficient. He knew instantly that one of the dearest projects of his life was in danger, and a sudden and uncontrollable anger overruled both reason and feeling.

"Ingrate !" he cried, as he stepped passionately

between the lovers. "Traitor and ingrate a thousand times !"

Harry met the accusation with an indignant protest.

"I have done nothing a gentleman may not do."

"A palpable lie, sir ! You are making love to Claire ! Yet you know that she is a great heiress, that she is my ward, and the promised wife of another man."

"I know nothing about Claire's money ; and if she was the king's ward, what is that to me ? As for her dead father's promise to another man, I shall seek from her own lips the word that will make her mine."

"I gave you shelter at the risk of my reputation and my estate, and you repay me by stealing the most precious thing in my house. In the same fashion your father stole away my sister Frances !"

"My father and my mother have passed beyond your judgment, sir."

"You are right so far. In all other respects you are wrong, and you know it."

"I know that I love Claire, and that right or wrong, I will try to win her !"

"Your presumption is incredibly wicked. Landless, homeless, nameless, what will you give her in exchange ? Your poverty and your misfortunes ? I am confounded by your impertinent conceit, sir ! In short, there is an end to the subject. You shall see Claire no more !"

"That is as may be. I am confounded, uncle, by your want of generosity. What right have you to insult me for my poverty and reproach me for my misfortunes ?"

At this moment madame entered the room. She

was in a temper quite equal to her son's, but she had it better under control ; and her enforced calmness not only gave her an air of invincible authority, but also cooled the quarrelling men like a blast of icy wind. She advanced with a deliberate resolution and laid her hand upon her son's arm.

"William," she said, "it is time for prayer, and I find you wrangling with Harry on your own hearth-stone."

"Look you, mother, you do not know all."

"Claire has told me."

"Harry has been making love to Claire !"

"I dare say ! they are both of a piece. Claire doubtless has been making love to Harry."

"It is impossible !"

"'Tis quite possible. 'Tis almost certain. Take my word for it."

"Claire is already engaged. She is incapable of coquetry !"

"Pho, pho ! No woman is. Every word to the contrary is a pack of nonsense. Be silent, William, until you can be reasonable. And supposing Harry has been making love to Claire, what then ? Claire is much honoured in his devotion."

"I pray you, mother, to have some regard for my feelings. Consider Claire's great wealth."

"Consider Harry's noble birth."

"*Tush !*"

"William !"

"Pardon my passion, mother. I am forced also to remember my nephew's disgrace and poverty."

"Harry is no longer in disgrace and poverty."

"Had my uncle given me time——"

"I am speaking for you, Harry. If your uncle had given you time he would have heard that the king had pardoned you." Then again addressing her son, she added : "Any Christian man would rejoice in this news. I say 'Christian,' William, hoping that you are one."

"If the news be true, I am glad of it for Harry's sake. It does not alter matters at all, regarding Claire. Her father left positive instructions for her marriage with Mr. Hutton's son, and I shall see that she carries them out to the last letter. We want——"

"We want nothing to-night but a little decent thankfulness and six-penny worth of common sense. I consider this an unnecessary and unpleasant conversation, and I care not how soon I finish it. Give me your arm, son William, I will go to my chair now ; and you, Harry, ring for the men and maids. They are waiting to pray, and we are preventing them by our disputing."

And as the stern law of duty was an ever-present consciousness to William Bouverie, he fulfilled without remark all that pertained to it ; all that the hour demanded. But though he selected the psalm of gratitude suitable to the occasion, and the hymn madame specially approved, he was sensible that every nobler feeling of his nature had "undergone the earth," and as soon as possible he went away to the covert of his private parlour. For he was deeply wounded by his mother's attitude. All his life long he had served her faithfully, and never at any time grieved her, and yet when it had come to an issue of such gravity, she had pointedly and passionately espoused the cause of his opponent, a youth whom she

had known but a few weeks, and who had, even within their short space, given her many disappointments and anxieties.

For two hours he sat rigid, his face sternly set, his eyes heavy with tears. Then he heard George return, and he called the young man to him, and they talked over the affair until the early summer dawn began to break. William Bouverie pointed it out, and rose with a great sigh.

"George," he said, "if I were punished for my faults as severely as I am generally punished for my kind deeds, I should be one of the most unhappy of mortals."

This reflection sprang from a heartache, for he was learning a lesson usually studied under a sense of wrong or injustice, that kindness begins in *purpose*, but that love is of pure favour, often given without reason or desert ; reaping where it has not sowed, and gathering where it has no right, but that of partiality and grace.

George considered the desponding words for a few moments, then looked up at the brightening east.

"Sir," he answered cheerfully, "it is a divine necessity to love, and we do kindness for God's sake, hoping for nothing again, and Dr. Young is surely right in saying :

" ' It never was loving that emptied the heart,
Nor giving that emptied the purse.' "

William Bouverie took the words into his own troubled heart, and the men parted with a smile.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY'S PARDON.

AT eleven o'clock next morning Harry was at Mr. Whitefield's lodging. He found the preacher dressed in full canonicals, waiting for him, and he was much impressed with the dignity which the black silk gown, the lawn sleeves and bands, and the close white wig imparted to his tall figure and beautiful countenance.

The morning was dull and gray, and exceedingly sultry, and the premonitory hush of a coming storm was noticeable in the depression of the usually noisy streets. Fortunately, the rain did not begin to fall until they were within the great court next to Pall Mall. Here, at the head of the grand staircase leading to the rooms of state, they were met by one of the lord chamberlains, who led them past the guardroom, and so to the privy chamber, where he said His Majesty would presently come.

There were a few nobles in waiting, but the gloom of the storm, which had now broken, was so great that they looked more like the phantoms of a dream than living men. In the vivid lightning their swords and glittering stars, and buckles, and orders flashed and darkened ; but their stolid silence and the clamour of the elements without gave them an air of mystery, unhappy and unfriendly. Only Mr. Whitefield seemed superior to their surroundings, and it was well

for Harry that he was in touch with a spirit so courageous, so serene, and so hopeful.

The delay was not really long but the minutes were heavy with anxiety, and Harry was thankful when the stir of the royal advent became evident. The king entered abruptly, walking with a short, dignified step, and showing on his frowning, florid face decided signs of annoyance ; for the storm had interfered with his usual walk, and George II. liked to do the same things, at the same hour, every day of his life.

He was accompanied by the Princess Amelia, the Duke of Newcastle, Lady Chesterfield, and a few officers of the household ; and as all of them had been made to bear a share of the king's chagrin, the appearance of the group was not cheering. Lady Chesterfield, however, in passing Whitefield, gave him a glance full of encouragement—a glance also conveying a need for expedition, which was rendered intelligible by his previous conversation with her. For she had then said, "Remember, if this matter ever come to handkissing, His Majesty will brook no delays and no explanations."

As soon therefore as the king had taken his seat under the canopy, Mr. Whitefield and Harry advanced. Harry, as a suppliant, knelt at a little distance from the chair, Mr. Whitefield standing at his side. The king immediately addressed Mr. Whitefield.

"How do you do, sir ? It is a big storm. Who is this young man that you bring to me ?"

"Sire, it is the grandson of your liege servant the late Nicholas Bouverie. The young man has no earthly hope but in your mercy. For Christ's sake, then, have mercy upon him."

"Yes, yes, I have heard. I have heard a great deal about the grandson of this Nicholas Bouverie." Then addressing Harry, he inquired sharply :

"What is your name ?"

"If it please your Majesty, my name is Harry Cresswell."

"Where was your estate ?"

"In Northumberland, sire."

"When was it granted to your family ?"

"King Stephen enfeoffed my ancestor on the battlefield, sire."

For a moment King George steadily regarded the kneeling youth. The mention of King Stephen and the battlefield did more for him than the charity and loyalty of Nicholas Bouverie ; for George had himself borne arms, and borne them bravely ; and this suppliant youth was a soldier. Some subtle fellow-feeling touched the sovereign's sentimental heart. He looked down at his sword, and then his glance wandered to the nobles, who were intently watching the scene. Instantly every hand was at a hilt, but it was Lord Rashleigh who first flashed his blade from its scabbard, and taking it by the point, presented it to the king. There was a slight movement, and then the royal words of pardon :

"*Rise, Sir Harry Cresswell !*"

"God save King George !" cried Harry, standing up with a happy face. The king gave him his hand to kiss, and then went quickly into an adjoining drawing-room.

The dreaded interview was over, and Harry looked at Mr. Whitefield with a gratitude neither the place nor his own feelings permitted him to fully

express. For they lingered in the stately presence chamber until the storm had passed, and a glint of watery sunshine picked out gloriously the gilded initials of Henry and Anne Boleyn, above the great chimney-piece. In the carriage it was possible to speak freely, and more than once Harry was on the point of losing control of himself in the natural emotion that surged within him for expression. Had he been alone, he would doubtless have wept with all the abandonment of a boy ; for the sense of relief was, at first, almost painful. His wise friend understood this. He made no "opportunity" of the occasion, nor did he remind him of his obligations. But he did remember that Harry had neither eaten nor drank that day, and he compelled him to rest half an hour in his room and take some refreshment.

Harry was then able to talk with composure, and he desired to walk back to Bloomsbury, for he longed to be in motion, and was sure the confinement of a carriage would irritate him. But Whitefield was not inclined to sanction this quick exposure of his person. "Your pardon is not two hours old," he said ; "it will not be known to the general public until the newspapers make it so ; if then you have any enemy, he may yet take advantage of your past."

"I have but one enemy in the world," answered Harry, "and I am thankful to say he is safe in the Fleet prison."

This remark elicited the whole story of Allan Cresswell's treachery ; and Harry told it with a freely expressed and contemptuous animosity. Frequently Whitefield looked at the young man, and on the preacher's face there was a look of mingled sorrow and

anger. Finally, he stooped to the Bible that lay open on the table, and began rapidly to turn its leaves. The action was not sympathetic, and Harry brought his story to a close, and rose to depart. Then Whitefield said to him :

“ Sir Harry Cresswell, there was in old Jerusalem a man who owed ten thousand talents, and because he had nothing to pay ”—here he lifted the Bible and began to read from it—“ ‘ The Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants which owed him a hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.’ ”

“ Sir,” answered Harry, “ I thank you.”

There was no advice given and no promise made, but each felt that of a certainty there would soon be one prisoner less in the gloomy old prison.

Harry had thought he would like to walk to Bloomsbury, but, once on the way there, he found that even two horses did not take him fast enough. The memory of Claire, as he had seen her for one moment the previous night, filled him with a joy that would not brook patience, and the words he intended to say to her went through his heart like wine. Now also, that he was quite alone, he began to realise the wonderful transition in his circumstances. He had come out from the shadow of death ; he was noble, and not an alien ; he was rich, and not poor ; he might woo the girl he loved without fear and without favour. He could not reason about these things ; he could only feel them, and he was soon in a state of mental intoxication. But what of that ? Is

not the folly of the passions often more lovable and tolerable than the wisdom of repose and prudence ?

The first sign of his condition was the frantic speed to which he urged the driver. Claire, who had been walking monotonously up and down her room for hours, heard the gallop of the horses and the impatient summons at the closed door, and divined what it meant. The great suspense was over, and she threw herself upon her bed and wept for joy. Madame, listening with beating heart, had the same conviction ; she trembled, and could not rise, though she desired to do so. In a few moments, Harry was holding her hands, and she was drinking in his exclamations and his enthusiasm.

"I am my own man again ! I am free ; I am happy ! I am Sir Harry Cresswell, re-enfeoffed by the king's grace. God save the king !" And between every sentence he kissed away the tears of joy that wet her cheeks.

"But where is Claire ? Claire ! Claire !" he called, and then became silent, and looked around the room, with a face suddenly fallen and disconsolate. "Where is Claire, dear grandmother ?"

"You cannot see Claire. She has orders to remain in her room until you leave the house. Ah, child, no cup of joy is without its bitter drop !"

"On my soul, it is too bad ! 'Tis a cruel order, and my uncle is a cruel fellow to give it. This is the only happy day I have known for years, and he turns its joy into sorrow. Send for Claire !"

"I have not the power."

"I will write her a letter."

"It cannot be given to her."

"My uncle takes this way to bid me leave his house?"

"It is true. But you have now your own house, and the sooner you go to Cresswell the better."

"I shall not go to Cresswell until I have seen Claire. Will you tell her all I have told you?"

"Surely I will."

"'Tis a sad ending to a glad hour. Only you are faithful to me. George has of late been cold and shy, and last night my uncle was both insulting and cruel. It is time I went. Do not cry, dear. I wonder not at the parting; the wonder is, we have lived so long together."

"Where are you going, Harry?"

"First of all, to my sisters. Fanny will tell me of a proper inn."

"Very good. But you must have money for your expenses. Lawyers and commissioners will be to pay. You will have fees and vails to give. You will have clothing to buy, and a thousand necessities that only gold can meet. My child, I am your banker. Here is five hundred pounds for your present requirements. No thanks, no thanks! Your happiness is sufficient."

"My dear grandmother, my dear mother!"

"My dear child! You are the last and sweetest love of my life." She stroked his hair, she kissed him fondly, and then bade him throw his large cloak over his court suit, and hasten to his sisters. "Someone," she said, "will have carried the news to Richmond, and they will be impatient to see you."

"And Claire?"

"Claire will come to me when you are gone. She will weep, I dare say, but I shall try to comfort her."

I will tell her how handsome you look, how gracious the king was, and——”

“And how broken-hearted I am. And how entirely I love her. And that I will make ways and means to see her, though I die for it. And that I shall feel the want of her, in every hour of my life; in all my joys and in all my pains, whether I wake or sleep !”

“I promise not so much, Harry. Why ask it ?”

“Because I am no longer myself without Claire. Indeed, I cannot, cannot go without seeing her.”

“You may go at once, for you will not at this time see her. The force of circumstances is against you, Harry, and resistance to that force is vain. Good-bye, my child. If your dear name comes, even by chance, to my lips, I shall say, ‘May it be blessed !’ How will you go to Richmond ?”

“The carriage is waiting. It will take me to the Arundel stairs, and a couple of oars will shortly pull me to Richmond.”

“Then again, good-bye, Harry. Always be loving and true and brave ;” and a tender light from under her wet eyelashes shone upon him until he passed out of sight.

At that hour madame suffered a fresh bereavement. The splendid house was cold and silent, and life itself was empty and dark without Harry. But Harry, in spite of his disappointment concerning Claire, was glowing with a constantly increasing excitement. Everything was beautiful, wonderful, full of joy, and the promise of joy. The lonely, bloody memories of the past ; the base ingratitude, “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” the shames of poverty, the fears of death, all the black shadows of his miserable youth,

were gone forever. The sun was shining gloriously ; the gay city full of life and stir. The sounds of traffic and travel and pleasure filled his ears. Fair ladies caught a glimpse of his smiling face, and smiled as they passed him. He was so happy that he saw nothing but happiness wherever he went.

The city also seemed to have burst into singing. Street hucksters of all kinds were singing their wares. Chairmen, waiting to be hired, were singing ; porters, with their burdens on their shoulders, were singing ; watermen on the river stairs, waiting for the cry of " First Oars," were singing, and it was the same simple, merry little melody. Harry caught its music as he passed along and wrote it on his heart. It seemed a part of his happiness, or, at least, an accidental that fitted into it.

Going up the river he met many pleasure barges with tilts of canvas or of green boughs. They were full of merry company ; and the music of their flutes, and fiddles, and voices followed Harry all the way. It was a fairy scene, an enchanted journey, and he was like one who dreamed, until the oars stopped at the wharf belonging to Wildermere House. " A crown, sir ! a crown, sir ! " cried the boatmen, and Harry answered, " I will break no gold this day ; a sovereign is little enough." The men laughed boisterously in their pleasant surprise and put off the boat, crying back their thanks, and so down the river with a roar of song about " the girls in our town."

Harry found himself on a gravelled walk shaded by hazel bushes and bordered with London pride and polyanthus. It led him into a garden which might have been brought from Holland—a garden of pyram-

idal yews and treillages of square cradle walks, with windows clipped in them; of brilliant flowers and great green beds of mint, and thyme, and camomile. A house of white stucco with Ionic pillars and a wide portico was soon visible, and as he came near to it he heard the sound of clinking glass and of merry conversation, and saw through the open windows Lord Pomfret and his sisters Fanny and Bernicia. He heard Bernicia cry "Harry!" He leaped the low window sill, and the next moment Lady Pomfret was embracing him. Indeed, there was such a tumult of rejoicing that he could not at once realise it. Lord Pomfret was calling for more wine and another service; Lord Rashleigh was on his feet with a shout of welcome, and the great beauty, Miss Arabella Damer, was raining sympathetic smiles and vowing to Lord Rashleigh "that she envied his sisters most completely."

"You are the hero of the day, Harry!" cried Lady Pomfret, and she kissed him again and wept a little, then laughed at herself for weeping.

"Upon my word you are the fashion, sir!" laughed Lord Rashleigh. "I would gladly be a rebel myself to be so sweetly forgiven."

Then Harry bowed as well as his sister's clinging affection would permit, and answered joyfully, "Ten thousand thanks, my lord, for the honour you did me this morning. In faith, I shall feel your sword on my shoulder as long as I live, for its touch went to my heart."

"Look you, Fanny," interrupted Lord Pomfret, "here is a hot dish or two, and fresh bottles of port and pomard. Let the young man eat and drink.

I'll warrant it will suit his stomach better than kisses."

"Fie! fie! my lord," said Miss Damer, affecting a pretty anger; but she made room for Harry at her side, and he was glad of the hot dishes and wine, and ate, and drank, and talked, while the ladies smiled and adored him, and the gentlemen questioned and passed the bottle.

Now there are fortunate moments in which mortals do and say precisely the right thing, and Harry, following the impulse of a generous and grateful nature, found such a happy time. For when Lord Pomfret called fresh glasses to toast the new baronet, Harry said:

"Good, my dear brother, but first let us drink to the king, and then we will drink to Mr. Whitefield, and afterward I shall find more honour than I deserve." And Lord Pomfret was delighted with the loyalty and modesty of his proposal. So they stood up to drink the king's health, and then to Mr. Whitefield's name. Harry told the story of Madame Bouverie's intercession and the quick sympathy and ready help of the preacher.

As he did so a gentler spirit quieted the company. Bernicia and Lord Rashleigh looked thoughtful, Lady Fanny sighed, and Miss Damer said, "it was a mercy she was not in the way to meet that heavenly Mr. Whitefield, or she would certainly turn Methodist," while Lord Pomfret sipped his wine and explained how the king two weeks gone had nearly choked to death with an imposthume, which had broken favourably while Mr. Whitefield was in the royal bed-chamber, and thus His Majesty was yet in a religious mood and

kindly disposed to Mr. Whitefield, so that Sir Harry, he concluded, "could not have chosen a luckier time nor a more powerful friend."

Thus quite unwittingly the good name sobered the company, and they rose from the table and looked out into the garden, which in the warm twilight was in the very height of all its sweets. Lord Rashleigh took Bernicia's hand and said softly, "The moon is just rising ; let us walk to the riverside and cool ourselves a little." And then Harry turned to Miss Damer, and she called for her India crape shawl and taught him how to fold it round her throat, and so looked into his face and down at his hands till he was in a flush and flutter of pleasure, and ready to kiss the pretty feet she vowed were "too thinly shod for aught but dancing a minuet."

"Oh, you are very delicate, Arabella !" said Lady Pomfret, "you are sweetly delicate ; but the ground is dry and there is no harm in the breeze and the moonlight. Be good enough to remember, however, that in fifteen minutes tea and coffee will be served in the drawing-room, and the boy is now ordering the tables and laying out the cards and the counters."

"But will you not come with us for the fifteen minutes, Fanny ?"

"La, my dear ! you can all be fools without my help. I pray you have some pity on my poor brother. You have slaves enough to your charms without this conquest."

"Fanny, this is extremely unhandsome of you. Your brother would be the greatest conquest I shall ever make." Then Miss Damer courtesied to Harry, and he gave her his arm, and Lady Fanny watched

them disappear among the green-hedged walks, and then turned to her husband, who was enjoying his pipe of Virginia.

"Is he not handsome—wise, modest, witty?"

"He is your brother, Fanny."

"And with what good taste he is dressed! Who could have chosen for him that suit of rich black satin? No tinsels, no embroideries! As for the marvellous lace of his tie and ruffles, I am sure they came from Grandmother Bouverie's treasures. But nothing could have been more suitable than his whole costume. Harry is as fine a gentleman as ever England bred."

"Fair and softly, my dear. Harry is not without faults."

"Say what you will, he may have a new mistress. It is easily seen that Arabella is passionately taken with him."

"Hang it, Fanny! You talk of nothing but love. Did not Bernicia tell us Harry was far gone with the little Dissenter? 'The sweetest woman ever the sun shone on,' she said."

"Yet for all that, I should not wonder if the charming Arabella teaches him to forget."

"Nothing is a wonder in love."

"Everything is a wonder in love."

"Look you, Fanny, let me smoke my pipe in peace."

"I told them to be back in fifteen minutes, but I'll warrant the fifteen minutes grows to half an hour."

"If it does not, they are much to blame. Two handsome fellows and two lovely girls, moonlight and flowers, and the boats on the river—Jove, Fanny! we have been guilty ourselves in the same kind. Do you

remember that night at Lady Hervey's—that night I asked you to marry me? We were lost two hours in the garden. Until then, I had thought myself to be the wisest of men."

"My dear John, you may yet safely think so; 'tis well known that men of sense make the best fools in the world."

"Well, then, Fanny, I am still blessing myself for my folly. I hear singing."

"They are coming up the holly walk, and Bernicia and Rashleigh are singing 'Nancy Dawson.' 'Tis a very taking air."

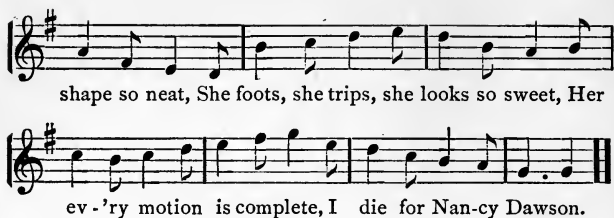
"'Tis my utter aversion. I am sick to death of it."

"'Tis as good as another. But why should people sing, when they can talk more sensibly?" and she hastened to the drawing-room, and cried to the company to "hurry," and so singing and laughing and exclaiming they obeyed her. But as soon as Bernicia entered the room, she sat down and began to play, and as the tea was poured and handed round, the song was merrily continued:

Of all the girls in our Town, the black, the fair, the

red, the brown That prance and dance it up and down, There's

none like Nan-cy Daw-son. Her eas-y mien, her



Now people say a great deal in song that it would be difficult to say in conversation ; but Lord Rashleigh was in very earnest, and " Nancy Dawson " was to him only another name for Bernicia Cresswell. So he threw his soul into the protestation :

" I die for Nancy Dawson ! "

and looked into Bernicia's face for some answering light.

It was at this moment that George Abney entered. He had hastened to congratulate Harry, had put aside all selfish considerations, and put down all the small jealousies that arose out of the situation and which naturally made his heart sore. For he had certainly been the first mover in Harry's redemption. He had taken a long journey, he had given freely his time, and gold, and affection. He had placed himself in a position which made him liable to fine and imprisonment, he had brought the outlaw into domestic relations which had caused him many small worries and annoyances, and he was by no means sure that his sister's happiness was not seriously involved in Harry's future ; and yet others had reaped all the honour and gratitude he might justly claim.

That in life it is the usual way for one to sow and another to water, and another more favoured to reap the result, made it no easier for George's consideration. His first glance at Bernicia and Lord Rashleigh convinced him that all his prosaic labour, and giving, and endurance, was but the sowing and the watering; Rashleigh had but flashed his sword into the king's hand, and then ridden post-haste to Richmond with the news, and yet he evidently had the love and gratitude of the occasion. Indeed, it seemed to George that not even Mr. Whitefield received his due. Bernicia truly said: "Mr. Whitefield has been indeed a saviour to Harry," but her beaming eyes, her radiant smile, and the little intelligent nod of her head all appeared to give to Lord Rashleigh far sweeter acknowledgment. For George's kindness was of long ago, and Mr. Whitefield was absent, but Lord Rashleigh was the benefactor of the hour. And it is the present good we honour, the grace of the past is forgotten, the grace of the future not sure.

But the most wise of all the virtues is a calm patience, and, fortunately, George was able to affect it, for he did not deceive himself. He knew well, though everyone was very kind to him, no one would have missed him, or cared had he been absent. His visit was a mistake; happiness could do without him. This position was all the more felt, because both his principles and his ignorance put him outside of the ordinary shows of happiness. Cards he had been taught to abominate. The capers of the jig or the country dance, and the graces of the minuet, were alike outside of his inclination and his ability. And

as Lord Pomfret hated to play cards with women, he was well pleased to talk with the young merchant on politics and commerce.

This, however, was not the kind of pleasure George had coveted. He had hoped to find the ladies and Harry alone. He had messages from madame and from Claire to deliver. There was a certain duet he loved to sing with Bernicia, and he had been humming it to himself all the way up the river. In some direction or other, he was sure that the evening would give him happy opportunities with her. He intended also to have a reasonable talk with Harry concerning his sister Claire; for to be brotherly with Bernicia's brother was one of the strongest desires he had.

All these hopes had dwindled to the discussion with Lord Pomfret and the spectacle of Bernicia playing whist or dancing a minuet with Lord Rashleigh. Instead of being one of the chief actors in the unusual joy of the hour, he was a mere spectator. Even when the mirth resolved itself into teaching Harry a minuet, and Miss Damer showed him how to hold her hand, and Lord Rashleigh how to take the step, and Fanny and Bernicia laughed at his mistakes, George was supposed to be fully entertained in discussing with Lord Pomfret the excessive duties on Russian imports.

At midnight supper was served, and George was seated at Bernicia's left hand. She was very gracious to him, but then she was also very gracious to Lord Rashleigh, who sat at her right hand, and who constantly spoke of persons and things necessarily unknown to George. This marked exclusion angered the young merchant, but he preserved an apparent

unconsciousness of it. Already he had learned that they who suffer with patience suffer less. However, in the confusion which accompanied the retiring of the ladies, Bernicia gave him her hand, with a smile that put all resentment out of his heart.

"I have many messages for you," he said, "but I have found no opportunity to give them."

"It has been such a stupid evening," she answered. "I suppose Harry has enjoyed it. I am sure no one else has. What time do you leave in the morning?"

"My boat will wait at nine o'clock. Shall I see you at all? Can I hope for five minutes of your company alone?"

"Do you rise early? I am often in the holly walk about eight o'clock. Good-night, sir!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE QUARRELSOME DISEASE.

THE hope contained in Bernicia's words, though hurried and indefinite, made the night tolerable to George, and in the morning Bernicia redeemed it. She had no hesitation in doing so. She felt certain Lord Rashleigh would sit the night far out with her brother and brother-in-law over the cards, and then sleep until near the noon hour. Fanny would just as certainly take her chocolate in bed ; and as for the servants, they would either be about their duties or looking after their personal comforts.

It was an exquisite morning, and George was a lover whom the morning suited. The daytime, with its sense of duty to be done, and its air of real life to be lived, fitted his noble wooing. Bernicia could not walk with him and feel the clasp of his hand and listen to his strong, sweet voice, and remain unmoved by his beauty and eloquence, his ardour and his truth.

Undoubtedly she was coy and variable, most uncertain of her own heart, and very little disposed to the life to which a marriage with George Abney would bind her. But George Abney, apart from his own environment, and considered only as a lover, was strongly attractive. There was a manliness about his wooing far more pleasing to Bernicia than the elaborate courtesies and compliments of fops and courtiers.

So this morning she let George both feel and see her preference ; and when he bade her farewell at the head of the flight of stairs leading to the river, it was with a happy and confident face. His boat lay at the foot, and the men at the oars were singing " Nancy Dawson " as they waited for him.

He stood for a moment or two watching the vanishing figure of Bernicia, and when he turned to the river Lord Rashleigh was just leaving his boat. A quick sense of impending trouble assailed George, and his first impulse was to arrest his soul and bid it consider and be careful. This impulse naturally induced a deliberate manner, and the two men met about the middle of the flight. Rashleigh's manner was full of passion ; he looked defiantly at George, and said, in a menacing tone :

" Well, sir ? "

" Well, sir," answered George, with assumed nonchalance.

" I will thank you, Mr. Abney, to keep out of my way."

" I will not go one hair's breadth out of *my* way to avoid yours, Lord Rashleigh."

" The devil take your impudence, sir."

" It is for you to take, not for the devil."

" You shall hear from me, sir ? You shall hear speedily from me."

" I shall count it no honour to hear from you, Lord Rashleigh."

George had been going quietly down the steps during the conversation, and as he spoke the last words he stepped into his boat.

" A noisy stave and a crown for it," he said to the

men, and thus to the first stroke of their oars they trolled loudly out the last line of the verse they were singing :

“ I die for Nancy Dawson.”

George had purposely seated himself with his back to his rival, but at these opportune words he turned his face to Lord Rashleigh. And Lord Rashleigh found in its expression an intolerable offence. He was sure George was mocking his singing of the same words on the previous night ; that he was mocking his passion, and the way he had chosen to express it ; and no words could have so infuriated the angry lover.

It was, however, impossible to say anything more at that moment, and he told himself that his answer should go on a sword's point. With this resolve he glanced into the shade of the holly walk. As he expected, he saw the flutter of a dress, and he went forward with hasty footsteps. Bernicia turned as he approached, and for a moment her beauty conquered his anger. She was as fresh as the morning in her white dimity gown, her scarlet shoes, her little gypsy bonnet tied under her chin, and her necklace of coral and gold beads.

“ Good-morning, Lord Rashleigh ! ” she said, with a beaming smile ; and then, seeing the anger on his white face, she dropped her eyes and pretended to be fastening one of the coral and gold clasps of her open bodice. He put his hand firmly, almost roughly, on her shoulder.

“ You are false as you are fair ! ” he cried. “ Why are you out so early this morning ? ”

"'Twas my humour, and I mostly follow my humour."

"You came out to smile and sigh that silly young Abney into a fool's paradise."

"What then?"

"You have driven me to the end of my patience."

"You have been there before, Lord Rashleigh—very often."

"Twenty times last night, when we were singing, when we were dancing, you looked love at me. Love was in your smiles, your touch, your words. This morning you have the same smiles and words for Mr. Abney. I have believed your coyness and uncertainties to be an innocent girl's modesty and ignorance of love. I believe in you no longer. I trust you no longer. I love you no longer."

"I thank you. Your love has been a tedious, troublesome affair. Remove your hand from my shoulder. I saw you last night biting your thumb at my friend, Mr. Abney, and this morning I warned him of your temper, for 'tis a vile one—that is 'why.'"

"I care not for the 'why.' As for Mr. Abney, my temper is to make cold clay of him before another sunrise."

"Two can play at that game."

"And I promise you with a vengeance! Insolent, trading fellow!"

"You are absurdity itself. Your talk is ever of killing someone. A man that can do nothing but bully and threaten is a ridiculous animal. George Abney is your master at every point. Will you please to go, sir? I am horribly tired of your swaggering."

"So false! So cruel!"

"If you said anything pleasant you would lose your speech."

"I am distracted! I have neither patience nor wisdom left!"

"A nice account to give of yourself. You are becoming a disagreeable creature. When will you go?"

"Do you care, if I go to my death? I swear you will not give me a thought."

"They why go to your death?"

"Because my love for you——"

"You have said you no longer love me."

"My honour——"

"As for your honour, if it lies in barking and biting, you are honourable indeed. Such 'honour' is too subtle for my understanding."

"To-morrow by this time——"

"I suppose you will have eaten Mr. Abney?"

"To-morrow by this time——"

"To-morrow come never!" and with the contemptuous disclaimer she turned from him and went deliberately back to the house. As soon, however, as she was within its shelter, she fled like one distraught to Lady Pomfret's room.

"Sister Fanny! Sister Fanny!" she cried, throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, "I am the most miserable creature! I am undone! Send me back to Cresswell! I entreat you, send me back!"

"What is the matter with you?" asked Lady Pomfret, who was idly drinking her chocolate in bed, and who was both startled and angered by these sudden exclamations. "What is the matter? Your airs and passions, Bernicia, grow beyond a joke. Do you want

to be the talk of all the footmen and wenches in the town ? ”

“ Lord Rashleigh and George Abney are going to fight a duel. ”

“ It serves you right. Twenty and twenty times I have told you either to stick to one lover or to have a dozen. Two are most dangerous. They are ever ready to cut each other's throat. How did this thing come about ? ”

“ The morning is so lovely, and the flowers, and the sunshine—— ”

“ Oh, miss, let the flowers and the sunshine pass, and come to the men. Pray where have you been this ‘ lovely ’ morning ? ”

“ I but walked with George Abney to the steps at the river side. He must have met Lord Rashleigh, but what they said to each other I know not. Rashleigh followed me in a bitter passion, and with many impertinences vowed he would challenge Mr. Abney to-day. ”

“ We cannot have a duel in the family at this date, Bernicia. It is too late, and too early. Had it been in May, it would have set your fame on the four winds of heaven, but the town is now empty, and the affair will be stale after a nine days' wonder. ”

“ Lord Rashleigh will kill George ! Oh, Fanny ! Fanny ! ”

“ *Fiddle-de-dee !* ” and at this moment Harry, fully dressed, and with his hat in his hand, came into the room. His face was shining with hope and pleasure, and he said with a laugh :

“ I have only time to salute you, Fanny. Lord Rashleigh is to take me to his tailor, and then intro-

duce me at White's, and the Cocoa Tree. But what is the matter?"

"Matter enough, Harry. Here is word of a duel between Lord Rashleigh and George Abney, and nothing could be less desirable."

Then all the light went out of Harry's face, and he sat down and looked angrily at Bernicia. "Your fault, miss!" he said. "I am sure it is. I have seen your ways with your lovers. You lift them to the skies one day, and you snap your fingers at them the next. Let me tell you, your coquetries of last night are like enough to be my ruin. It was in your presence Lord Pomfret told me to keep very much out of sight and hearing until my papers were signed, sealed, and delivered, and you have taken this way to put my name in everyone's mouth. What now is the king to think of the Cresswell family? If Lord Rashleigh is killed or wounded for Miss Cresswell's vanity, he will be wroth, for Lord Rashleigh is much in his favour. If George Abney is your victim, then the Dissenters—who look upon the young fellow as a very David—will make no end of petitioning for the punishment of Lord Rashleigh. In either case the name of Cresswell must come up as an offence to His Majesty. You have behaved cruelly to me, Bernicia."

"And to Lord Pomfret, also," said Fanny dolorously; "for there will be plenty to remind the king that my lord married one of the Cresswell family. As for my unhappy self, I do not pretend to guess what I am to say to Lady Chesterfield and her set. They will turn up their demure eyes, and speak from the summit of their whites about the wickedness of the girls of the age, and I am without an excuse. I

hope now, you have done plenty of mischief to satisfy you, miss."

"How can you find it in your heart to scold me, Fanny? You know that Lord Rashleigh has a temper like touch-wood. Cross him by a look, and he is on the ran-tan in a moment."

"Then you ought not to have crossed him by half a look," said Harry. "And I am sorry for George Abney, though I have no doubt he will die handsomely. He is made throughout of the finest fibre."

Then Bernicia began to sob bitterly, and Fanny said: "Perhaps you had better go to Lord Rashleigh, Harry. For your sake he may pass by the affair."

"I would not ask him a favour to save my life. I am sure he is in the wrong. First and last I shall stand by George Abney. He stood by me when I was in very shame and necessity."

"Besides which," said Fanny scornfully, "George has a fair sister."

"It is most true, though I thought not of her at the moment, and that is a wonder, for she is in all my thoughts."

"This is nothing to the subject. Someone must go to Lord Rashleigh and induce him to save his anger till a better season. If he will not, all that was done yesterday may be undone."

"Then, Fanny," pleaded Harry, "you must get Lord Pomfret to see him. For God's sake, sister, for my sake, for all our sakes, a delay at least must be insisted on. If the king's mercy be not perfected, I am in a worse case than before. I am plunged in despair again."

"Lord Pomfret played all night, Harry. He is now in deep sleep. His man would as soon wake a bull of Bashan. But he is ever dressed by noon, and then he is usually good tempered. At that hour I can persuade him, doubtless."

"Bernicia," cried Harry, driven to desperation, "I say you have behaved most cruelly to me."

"Bernicia," said Fanny, echoing his mood, "you have often behaved selfishly, and often foolishly ; this morning you have managed to do both."

"I am not fit to live, Fanny, if all that Lord Rashleigh says, and all that Harry says, and all that you say of me, is true. However, 'tis a Heaven's mercy that I keep my own good opinion." Her face was burning with indignation, her head lifted proudly, and with these words she went haughtily out of the presence of her brother and sister.

Perhaps she was neither as troubled nor as angry as she affected to be ; or else the humour was as evanescent as her moods usually were, for as she passed along the corridor she stood at an open window and smiled as the glory and sweetness of the sky and the garden welcomed her. Not that she consciously took these things into her consideration,—women had not then learned to regard the whole visible world relatively to their emotions and their destiny,—it was simply that Nature was warm and sweet and pleasant, and her influence comforting as a smile would have been ; so that she instantly began to take a more cheerful view of her perplexities.

"If everything went just as it ought to go, there would be nothing to talk about," she thought. "I will speak to Tarset, she generally finds out a way."

This resolve was not unwise, for Tarsset belonged to that elemental class of women whose first instinct in every trouble is to stop crying and help themselves. And she had long apprehended this trouble. Frequently she had said to Bernicia : " If your two lovers were from the North Country, they would have been playing broadswords ere this." So she listened with great interest to Bernicia's tale, and Bernicia told it to Tarsset with far more circumstance than she had told it to her sister. She expected also more disapproval, but Tarsset's opinions were based on the moral aspect of the question, and not on its social consequences.

" It *is* a bad job, miss," she answered, " but I don't see that you are to blame for Lord Rashleigh's jealous temper. And 'tis a thousand pities you cannot learn to understand yourself better ; though, to be sure, men ought to give a girl time. Marrying is living together for fifty years, happen. I should think one year for trying and choosing is none too much."

" And 'tis scarce half a year since we came to London. But that is not the question now. For Harry's sake, and for all our sakes, this duel must be prevented. How ? My wise brother-in-law may see Lord Rashleigh before it is too late ; and he may not see him at all."

" I shouldn't trouble with Lord Rashleigh, miss. He dashes and bounces at everything. I would get word to Mr. Abney. It takes two fools to fight a duel, and if Mr. Abney is as wise as I think he is——"

" I will not do anything to put Mr. Abney in the wrong. Mind that, Tarsset ! "

" He will not do anything to put himself in the wrong. You may be very sure of that, miss. Send

me to London. I can maybe manage this business a bit better than you can."

"I shall eat my heart out with anxiety until you get back, Tarsset."

"Well, miss, I must say, you have earned a bit of anxiety. You are as cruel as a cat with your lovers, and in teasing them you have gone all lengths. I am sure I don't know why you do so."

"It is my way, Tarsset, and I like my way."

"Yes, miss. And 'tis perhaps a Heaven's mercy that they who will go their own way always come back by Weeping Cross."

"Scolding is nothing to the business in hand, Tarsset. And there is not a moment to lose. Why are you not hurrying? I know that you are bent on seeing Mr. Abney, then go at once to my Uncle Bouverie's wharf. Here is the address."

But though Tarsset took the address, she did not go to the Bouverie wharf. She went straight to Mr. Whitefield's residence. The preacher had gone out. "He was perhaps at the Tabernacle, or at the old Bailey Prison, or at Mr. Fletcher's house." There was no certain knowledge of his movements, and Tarsset said, "I shall wait here until he returns."

It was three o'clock before he did so, and the anxious woman was trembling with fear and impatience.

"Mr. Whitefield, sir," she cried, as soon as he appeared, "I am sick to death waiting for you! Oh, sir! there is a great thing for you to do, or all you did yesterday will be undone."

Then she told her story with as much haste and clearness as she could, for she thought there was an expression of dissent or impatience on her listener's face.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Jane Tarsset, sir. I am Miss Cresswell's servant and friend, from her birth hour."

"Then Mistress Tarsset, what do you think? Is it right for me to leave the preaching of Jesus Christ that I may take a part in such a wicked, senseless quarrel? Greater preachers than I—even the Apostles—said it was not reasonable to leave the word of God though it were to serve tables for the poor and needy."

"Sir, the Apostles were always a bit above the Master. *He* served tables. Five, and ten thousand people at a time took their bite of bread and fish from his hand. And this is a greater question than fish and barley bread; it is, happen, one of life and death. As for preaching Christ, sir, I shouldn't wonder if you did not find two or three in Bloomsbury Square needing the Gospel just as badly as the two or three thousand in Moorfield's Tabernacle. You have put your heart and hand out to save the Cresswells, and I would not draw them back now, sir, if I were you."

"I will not draw back, Mistress Tarsset. Where shall I be likely to find Mr. Abney at this hour?"

"Most likely he will be at the house in Bloomsbury."

"Then I shall go there."

"And I wouldn't waste any time, sir. I do not think there *is* any time to waste."

The message on which he was now sent did not please Mr. Whitefield for many reasons. He could not think it was in the way of his duty; he felt it rather to be a kind of imposition. He had other

pressing and pleasant engagements. His mind was fully bent on a meeting which was to consider the school for his orphanage, and this question was one lying close to his heart.

"When God's way goes with my own way," he sighed, "how easy it is to take it!"

Even when close to his destination he wondered whether it might not be the best wisdom to turn back, And as he was a man of vivid and vital emotions these restless thoughts and questionings impressed his countenance and his manner, so that he went into the house with that peculiar air of authority through which a man says plainly, "This is an unpleasant affair, but it is my duty, and I intend to do it."

He was led to the state parlour. George Abney was sitting at a table, and a young gentleman in deep brocade and embroidery, a tye wig, and lace ruffles, was standing opposite to him. Between them, on the shining surface of the highly polished wood, lay a broad white letter. George's face was slightly lifted to his visitor, but its expression was calmly contemptuous, though he was listening with a semblance of politeness.

Mr. Whitefield understood the position at a glance, and he required no introduction to the young merchant. Advancing rapidly he said :

"Mr. Abney, I perceive Lord Rashleigh's foolish challenge has arrived. On no account must you accept it."

"Sir," said Lord Rashleigh's friend, "it is one of the follies of this day that makes your face so familiar. And your interference in this matter, sir, is an impertinence!" Then touching the letter with his sword's

point, he turned with a scornful bow to George, and said : " Mr. Abney, I wait your answer to this, sir."

But before George could answer Whitefield took the small Bible which he habitually carried, from his breast, and put it upon the challenge.

" Mr. Abney," he cried, lifting his hands and his face to Heaven, " there lies God's eternal law : Thou shalt do no murder. If you dare to take Lord Rashleigh's challenge from beneath it, do so."

Then George rose to his feet. He was moved with indignation against the man who had forced him into such an equivocal position, and he said, with a passionate scorn :

" Mr. Dorrington, say to Lord Rashleigh, if he is tired of life, George Abney bids him hang or drown himself. He has no inclination to humour his jealous temper."

" Sir, by every law of honour you are bound to meet Lord Rashleigh."

" It is a beggarly law of honour that walks not with the law of God, nor even with the law of the country. I will none of it ! "

" Are you afraid of the Methodist's book ? "

" Mr. Dorrington," said Whitefield sternly, " let me remind you that your ancestors thought it worth their while not only to read the Methodist's book, but also to fight for the right to do so."

" I am not here to discuss my ancestors with you, Mr. Whitefield. Give me an answer to Lord Rashleigh's challenge, Mr. Abney, or I shall write you through the town a coward."

" I would be a coward, indeed, if I permitted any man to taunt me into a duel about Miss Cresswell.

For her honour or her life I would lay down my own life. Her love she has the right to give to whom she will. Do you think I would go in the dusk, behind Montagu House, and fight any man for it? I will not, sir."

The last words were partially lost in the bustle and noise of someone, whose approach, though unseen, conveyed the idea of power and pomposity. A moment afterward Lord Pomfret and William Bouverie entered together.

"Mr. Dorrington," said Lord Pomfret, in a loud voice, "your servant, sir! I hear you are the bearer of a very silly bit of paper. Pray, where is it?"

The eyes of all present fell instantly upon the white paper, but no one spoke, and no one offered to remove the book. The small black Bible lay there with an authority none dared to dispute; and Lord Pomfret turned to Mr. Whitefield and said:

"Sir, I am most gladly your servant. I have long desired to know you, and I think you and I are here on the same errand. Is that your book, sir?"

"It is my Bible, Lord Pomfret."

"The challenge is beneath it?"

"It is."

"Then the book has kept the peace, I see. Heartily, and from my soul, I thank it! But, as matters now stand, sir, you may remove it; for I am a magistrate, and can look after this foolishness."

Then Whitefield lifted his Bible with a reverent tenderness, and replaced it in his breast; and Lord Pomfret immediately seized the letter beneath it. He held it a moment in his large, dark hands, and then, with a frowning, scornful face, slowly tore it into shreds.

While this little scene was in progress, George was giving William Bouverie, in a few whispered words, the assurance he desired ; and Mr. Dorrington was speaking, with some passion, about his "principal's honour," and the satisfaction that would be demanded. This tirade Lord Pomfret did not at first answer, though the increasing temper and provoking deliberation with which he tore up the paper was perhaps the most aggravating of all replies. When he had flung to the floor the last scrap, he turned fiercely to the young man :

"Body of me, Mr. Dorrington !" he cried ; "if I hear another word about this silly affair, you will find that I can make London very unpleasant for you."

"My honour, Lord Pomfret."

"Honour ! Honour ! What honour is there in fighting about nothing at all ? Is my sister-in-law's name to be a peg for a couple of fools to air their 'honour' on ? By the Lord Harry, no ! I shall ask His Majesty to stand such men of honour a few hours in the pillory. Then where will their 'honour' be ?"

"That is a good thought, Lord Pomfret," said William Bouverie. "Such a punishment for the braggarts of honour would soon put a stop to duelling."

Lord Pomfret bowed in reply, and turning to George, said : "Mr. Abney, Lord Rashleigh has been persuaded by me to consider Sir Harry Cresswell's and Miss Cresswell's highest interests, and to forego, for their sakes, the satisfaction he might personally desire. I hope, for the same reasons, you will accept this decision, sir."

"I have already refused to fight Lord Rashleigh."

"*Oh-h-h-h !* Then I might have spared myself

much trouble. In short, Mr. Dorrington, there is an end, you see, to your preposterous little mission ; and we may all bid you good-evening. I will meet you at noon to-morrow in White's, and your prudence and silence will not find me ungrateful."

"Such affairs will leak out, Lord Pomfret ; and people will not spare to say——"

"To be sure, they will say anything. But, if there is any 'leak out,' I shall know whom to blame ; and you will not find me indifferent." With these words he turned to Mr. Whitefield and William Bouverie, and said, with a shrug of his big shoulders : "What a troublesome play is life ! And yet, one has to act the farce out to the very end."

Then Mr. Dorrington, with elaborate courtesies, took his departure, and Lord Pomfret said "he also must make a hurried return to Richmond, as the ladies were anxious, and Sir Harry in a gloomy temper, as it stood to reason they well might be."

"I have already sent assurances that no duel shall take place, Lord Pomfret," said George Abney, and though it was precisely what the nobleman desired, he turned from the young man without either thanks or approval.

Unfortunately the messenger sent by George to Richmond went into a tavern for a drink of ale, and drank himself to sleep, and thus it happened that Lady Pomfret, Bernicia, and Sir Harry spent some very long, unhappy hours. For Tarsset's news was neither positive nor reassuring, and Lord Pomfret did not reach home until the night was growing near to midnight. Lady Fanny had wearied herself with wondering and complaining, and was lying on the

sofa half asleep. Sir Harry was walking on the garden terrace in the moonlight, and Bernicia talking with Tarsset in her room, when all alike heard the clatter of the returning carriage and the strident echoes of the master's voice. He came into the room in the most pleasant manner, and his first words dissipated every fear.

"'Tis a mercy I went, Fanny," he cried, kissing his wife's pretty face, "else I do not know what would have happened. Two more bloody-minded men I never saw. By faith! I have a riddle for you. Who did I dine with? Guess?"

"His Majesty."

"George Whitefield."

"*John Pomfret!*"

"And your Uncle Bouverie. And the very noble old lady, your grandmother. And that angelical creature whom Harry adores. And the young Methodist, George Abney. As for the dinner itself, it was perfection. Such meats, and sweets, and wines; such silver and crystal and fine damask. If His Majesty ever again asks me 'How these Dissenters have grown so great?' I shall tell him to go to your Uncle Bouverie's and see on what meat these our Cæsars feed."

During this speech Bernicia came into the room. She was in a loose white gown, and had a scarlet Canton crape shawl folded across her shoulders. Her long black hair was uncoiled and her face pale with anxious waiting. She listened to her brother-in-law with impatience, and as he ceased speaking asked:

"But what of the duel? Is there to be a meeting or not?"

"The challenge had been sent when I saw Lord Rashleigh, thus the time of my visit was very favourable. For I have ever found that men who are mad to fight before the sending of the challenge take a cold fit as soon as the paper is beyond them. Lord Rashleigh was therefore reasonable. He consented, for Harry's sake, and my sake, and all our sakes, to keep his wrath warm for a twelvemonth. As for Mr. Abney, he had no thought of fighting. He must have slain every principle he had before he could have drawn his sword in a private quarrel."

"Sister Fanny," laughed Bernicia, "this is a very pretty farce. Let us call it 'Much Ado About Nothing.'"

"'Tis your own farce, Bernicia, made for you, call it what you like." Then turning to her husband, Lady Fanny asked, "What took you to Bloomsbury, John?"

"After leaving Lord Rashleigh I thought I might as well see your Uncle Bouverie, and so went to his warehouse. Mr. Abney had not been at business that day, and Bouverie was instantly in a hurry to reach his house in Bloomsbury. He asked me to go with him, and I, feeling inclined to see the matter out, did so. We found Lord Rashleigh's second, young Dorrington, already there; also Mr. Whitefield. The challenge had been offered, but not accepted. It lay upon the table between the men, and Mr. Whitefield's Bible was upon it. By Heaven! there was not a man of us, Fanny, who cared to lift the book and take the paper from beneath it. I wonder who sent the preacher there!"

"I sent Tarsset to Mr. Abney and she went to Mr.

Whitefield," said Bernicia. "I bless myself for doing so. It seems the Methodist preacher was a match for two courtiers and two merchants. On my honour, swords ought to go out of fashion!"

Lord Pomfret laughed heartily and answered, "My dear little pepper-corn, do not set your words to biting. Mr. Abney stood bravely by his principles, and Lord Rashleigh was not afraid to fight. Expediency, Bernicia, expediency. It makes all kinds of fools sensible men sometimes. As for young Dorrington, he will hold his tongue for a consideration, though it may cost me a losing game or two and a place in the Foreign Office."

"Do you think Mr. Whitefield will name the subject, John?"

"I did not even think it necessary to ask his silence. For an hour after dinner I heard him read and speak, and I wonder no longer at Bolingbroke and Chesterfield and Pultney. The man is a miracle. I brought him to his lodging in my carriage, and, in truth and good faith, Fanny, if I were not a courtier I would turn a Methodist."

"Will wonders ever cease? There is nothing now left to be astonished at. If you are John Pomfret, as I suppose you are, swear at me a little, that I may be sure I have my senses. And now pray tell me what my Uncle Bouverie said to George Abney?"

"He seemed to be well pleased with the young man, Fanny. I cannot say as much for your grandmother. She looked at him very strangely and said it was well for Lord Rashleigh that he had challenged George Abney and not her grandson, Sir Harry Cresswell. 'There would have been no put-off, and no let-

off, in that case,' she said, and I vow, Fanny, the old lady cut her beef into small pieces with all the passion imaginable."

Harry smiled a little sadly. "I fear grandmother is right," he answered. "I should have thought of myself first. George and Rashleigh thought of others first. Their nobility and bravery are beyond mine."

"Our mountain has brought forth its little mouse, Fanny," said Bernicia disdainfully, "and we may now go to bed and to sleep." But at the open door she paused, drew her scarlet shawl more tightly around her, and with an incomparable scorn in her face and voice added :

"The two men are two cowards. I will never speak to either of them again."

CHAPTER X.

BERNICIA'S INTERFERENCE.

IT is out of the past we must shape the present, and Bernicia could not escape this inexorable sequence. She vowed she would never speak to her lovers again, but it was beyond her power to dismiss by a resolution personalities that had become part of her own. Bernicia's passions were Bernicia herself, and she would have been nothing without them. And Lord Pomfret's description of the fighting *fiasco* filled her with rage. What right had these men to make her an excuse for their private tempers? But having done so, what an impertinence to link her name with a "shab-off," for she could find no word so expressive as this North Country term for a cowardly retreat.

To all her passionate invectives Tarsset listened with sympathy. She disliked people without weaknesses, and generally found it easier to bear the follies of passion than the selfishness of prudence; so Bernicia's opinions about her lovers were not contradicted. She only said at every fresh accusation: "It was just what might have been expected. What with one thing, and what with another, men were nothing but trouble-makers, and every woman, old and young, was bound to have trouble through them." And finally this generalising of the offence did bring some consolation.

It took the personal sting out of the girl's chagrin. It is individual annoyances that are hard to bear ; when they become general they become tolerable.

Yet some weeks of restless unhappiness followed this event. Bernicia knew that the private opinion of her relatives was very similar to her own, and it appeared to her they affected a quite unnecessary satisfaction in the result of their interference. Harry alone made no pretences. He admitted the necessity for this interference, but he also resented it. His first anger had been directed to his sister, but his real anger fell upon Rashleigh. The man had certainly done him a courtesy in the king's presence, but Harry now understood that it had been done to further his own suit with Bernicia. Supposing, however, that the kindness had been quite unselfish, it had been cancelled by the selfishness of a quarrel so incontinent and imprudent. Harry could not think of Rashleigh without burning cheeks and tingling fingers, for he felt keenly that the morning of his new life had been clouded by Rashleigh's thoughtless temper.

Harry sent him no message. He did not trouble him to fulfil the engagements he had made. It was Lord Pomfret who introduced him to the clubs and coffee houses ; who took him to the court tailors and drapers and mercers ; who found him a fashionable lodging in London ; and who, in the space of one week, launched the recreated baronet upon the gay tide of pleasure which was beginning to flow again toward St. James's and the court precincts.

Indeed, Lord Rashleigh seemed to have forgotten that he had promised to fill this office. He was so madly in love that he could only think of Bernicia

and of such events as related to her ; for, so far as she was concerned, all things had gone contrary to their seeming. His favour to Harry, and his breakneck ride to Richmond with the news of the pardon, should have brought his own suit the highest favour, and the supreme happiness of a delicious certainty. He expected as much. Alas ! all his hopes had ended in estrangement and disappointment. Bernicia refused to see him. She rejected his offerings and would not even answer his letters.

In those days men of fashion and leisure had far fewer interests than at present, and they were also far more in earnest about the things which did interest them. Self-denial was a scarcely comprehended virtue in love affairs, and self-effacement still more unusual. A great passion entirely possessed them and drove every other subject out of consideration. Rashleigh thought of nothing but Bernicia. He could not eat, nor sleep, nor in any way amuse himself. Even cards had lost their charm. He found nothing worth staking for. Bernicia's face haunted him perpetually. He thought of her in a hundred different ways, but most of all, in that splendid mood of anger and contempt in the holly walk. To subdue this beautiful, imperious creature to his love and his will was the master passion filling his life ; to be cast off by her sunk him into the depths of burning despair. In such a condition, how could he care for Harry Cresswell's lodgings and tailors and social amusements ?

It was perhaps as well he did not try to do so, for Harry evinced at once a disposition to order his life to his own liking. " Your brother is as masterful as

your lovely self, dear Fanny," said Lord Pomfret to his wife, after a few days in Harry's company. "In faith, he may take his own way for me. I never saw a man with such a palpable will. It runs mother-naked through his every word and deed. I would not try to contradict him—unless I wanted to fight him."

"It is the truth," answered Fanny, with an air of satisfaction. "That is the Cresswell way. Father was just so. Bernicia is not to be reasoned with. I have a pretty little will of my own, but you would not have the rudeness to wish it less, would you, John?" And Lord Pomfret instantly made the proper answer in the proper form.

"What has Harry been doing to-day, John?"

"The maddest thing he could do. He has taken Allan Cresswell out of prison, and sent him north with fifty pounds in his pocket. It cost me one hundred to put him in prison. Are you not going to be either angry or amazed, Fanny?"

"I have used my temper upon the subject. I knew Harry intended that very thing. George Whitefield told him to do it." Then Fanny related the circumstance, and Lord Pomfret listened with some curiosity.

"The Bible again, Fanny," he answered. "Depend upon it, there is some strange power in that book. I tell you, I could not lift it the other day, and I am no coward, I know! Upon my word, I shall ask Bernicia to read it to me on some Sunday night. I am tired enough of romances."

"You will go to Lady Huntington's the next thing. You will turn Methodist, and sing hymns with Bath and Chesterfield. Oh, John! John! I do not pretend to know what will be the consequences."

"Ask my enemies, they will tell you. Do you know that Lord Rashleigh is beside himself about Bernicia? The girl ought to be made to see him."

"Will you make her?"

"Hang it, Fanny! draw the line somewhere. I have the right to 'make' you. Can I do it? Bernicia is beyond my right. I wonder if she will ever forgive Rashleigh!"

"Why not? Women are angry with their lovers that they may have the pleasure of forgiving them. John, what think you of going back to town? You know that I hate the country, and only came here to pleasure *you*."

"To pleasure *me*! Now, Fanny!"

"Do you not remember how you longed for the green fields!"

"Green fields! Why, I hate to put my foot down unless it be on a pavement!"

"And a boat on the river," you said, "and a quiet place among trees and flowers!" and she looked at him with such a charming defiance, as she made these assertions, that contradiction was as impossible as it was useless.

"Have it your own way, Fanny. I do not pretend to know what I think, or feel, or say," and then he threw himself into a chair, pulled his long moustache, and burst into peal after peal of mirthful, mocking laughter.

"What is the matter with you, John? Are you laughing at me, sir?"

"No, my dear. I am laughing at women in general—thinking how you all go solemnly to church and promise to honour and obey, and never intend to do anything of the sort."

"Then laugh again at the men, who are silly enough to think women may perhaps intend it. And while you are laughing, bless yourself also, John, because women do take their own way,—which is generally a wise one,—instead of their husbands' way, which is always a foolish one. Are you willing to go back to town, sir?"

"It will be a great pleasure to return home."

"Then stop in Piccadilly this morning, and swear at the men and maids a little. Tell them I shall be home in a couple of days. I feel in a hurry, John, for Harry alone in London ought to have someone to look after him."

"Are you going to look after Sir Harry Cresswell? You will have your hands full, I promise you."

"I look after Lord John Pomfret, and have my heart full," and she crowned the words with a charming smile and courtesy that swept her into his arms. So he kissed her fondly, and went away, and she waved her scarf to him at the turn of the road, and he walked proudly and happily to his boat, and went down the river humming:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes."

As soon as he had gone Bernicia entered with a letter in her hand. "It is from Claire," she said, "and I ought to go to Bloomsbury; though to be sure, grandmother cares little who stops away, when she can see Harry."

"But she cannot see Harry."

"On the contrary, Harry has called thrice this week to see her."

"Did not Uncle William forbid him his house?"

"He forbade Claire to see or speak to Harry. Nothing could make uncle shut his door against a visitor whom grandmother wished to see. Evidently she has sent for Harry, and if Harry is disposed to visit her, he is sure to do so."

"How unpleasant! Well, Bernicia, we are going back to London on Thursday."

"Then if it please you, Fanny, I will see Tarsset pack my things to-day, and go into town to-morrow. I can stay with Claire until Thursday evening, and so escape the hurry, and worry, and scolding, and confusion of the change. And I do feel a little poorly. I do indeed, Fanny. I cannot bear much more at present."

"So you will jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. The hurry and worry of the change are only surface troubles; but at Bloomsbury, grandmother will put you through a ten hours' catechism, and Uncle William look a thousand disapprovals; and Claire want sympathy enough to wear you out to the last shred. Besides, will not George understand your visit to mean a desire for reconciliation?"

"Reconciliation indeed! George is in Gloucester, or I should not go to Bloomsbury. George knows already that I shall never speak to him again."

"That is absolute folly. You are a beauty, but you cannot throw your lovers about as if they were hazel nuts. To be sure, Thomas Damer is very much your servant, and he might take the place of George Abney. But Thomas Damer is not a desirable man for you to marry. Horses are all he cares for, and he is galloping his fine estate away at a break-neck speed."

"In marriage, money is only one thing."

"It is a very good and great thing."

"I shall marry for love, Fanny."

"Very well, but love sensibly. However, our first consideration now is 'up to London town'; and what a blessing we have London town to go to! Once we are there, Bloomsbury follows naturally. Harry will also be able to tell us just what are the state of affairs there."

"I know how they are. Uncle William will be stern and grave, Claire sad and tearful, and grandmother will scold a little. Claire says grandmother is always fretful on the days Harry does not visit her."

"Do you think that Harry goes to visit her alone? Such a thing is not to be believed. Take my word for it, he sees Claire also."

"I would take no one's word for that—not even George Whitefield's. Claire has given uncle her promise. She will keep her word, whatever happens."

"Promises that make other people miserable ought not to be kept. Just think of poor Harry!"

"Uncle William is to think of, too."

"Harry is nearer to me."

"I daresay Harry has all his plans laid for success."

"Plans! Nonsense! Plans never succeed. Other people plan against your plans. In love affairs chance is more potent than forethought. Forethought has nothing but probabilities to work on. Chance looks to the stars, to circumstances, to opportunities, and these things work miracles. Oh, I know it! Tell Harry to trust to chance. I do not see, for

my part, why he should not have the girl when he loves her so dearly."

"And she loves him. I know it."

"She has money?" said Fanny musingly.

"Lots of money."

"Cresswell is not going to rack and ruin as badly as Allan Cresswell said it was. But, then, it is out of repair a little; is it not, sister?"

"It is very much out of repair, Fanny."

"Lots of money would make it one of the finest places in Northumberland."

"It would, Fanny."

"Then I do hope you will keep that fact in your mind, Bernicia. It is the plainest thing in the world to me that Harry ought to marry Claire Abney. I only wish the girl had a few more faults. People without faults are terrible; there is no way to manage them. If Claire would only break her word and see Harry."

"She will not."

"Circumstances alter cases, and love makes people over again. You will keep Cresswell in mind?"

"I never forget the dear old home."

"Claire is only a woman, Bernicia."

"Only a woman, Fanny; and a woman in love."

"A poor creature, then. Here comes Arabella Damer, another 'poor creature' for Harry's sake."

"Make excuses for me, Fanny. I can bear no 'poor creature' but myself to-day," and, laughing scornfully at her own accusation, she left the room in a hurry.

The confusion and discomfort which Bernicia anticipated were fully realised during the following

week, the ways and means for such domestic changes being then of a character both tedious and cumbrous. Even when London was reached there was a crowd of servants and tradesmen employed in beautifying the Piccadilly mansion, and the household was restless and irregular. Much new furniture had been bought, and the bustle of its arrival, the discussions attending its arrangement, and the constant calls upon her attention and approval wearied Bernicia ; for she had lost her childlike delight in her mere surroundings, all her thoughts and feelings being for the time possessed by that vague melancholy which life distils from love, and disillusion, and vain regrets.

In Richmond she had felt a passing eagerness to go to Bloomsbury, but she had been more than a week in London before she roused herself to the unusual effort. Then one morning she had a letter which filled her with remorse. "Come to me, Bernicia ; I need you very much," wrote Claire. The few words went to Bernicia's heart like the cry of a child ; tears, longing, sorrow, she knew not what else of calamity was in them, and she prepared with haste, yet with great care, for an immediate visit.

Just as her coach came to the door, Harry called. He was richly and fashionably dressed in a brocaded suit of claret-coloured velvet, with a vest of cream-white satin. His laces were of the finest point, his shoes clasped with diamond buckles. A slight air of melancholy shadowed his face, but he was withal as noble and stately looking a young man as could be found in London. Bernicia smiled at him with affectionate pride.

"You are extremely handsome, Harry," she said ;

"but pray, sir, what has become of your old sword?"

He glanced almost disdainfully at the diamond-hilted weapon at his side, and answered: "My old sword is not for this life. I have put it out of my sight until I go to Cresswell. Then I will cross it with my grandfather's in the state dining-hall. Do you remember, Bernicia, the long, notched broadsword that lay in the chest with his bloody clothing?"

"The clothing had dropped to pieces nearly, Harry. How our hearts used to beat when we pushed up the lid in the dark room and looked at the laced coat and waistcoat stained with blood, and the battered hat, and the empty shoes, and the long, black sword on the top of all!"

"He died in the battlefield. He gave his life. I gave my youth to a lost cause; our swords may hang together." There was a moment's pause, and then Harry said sharply:

"You are going out, I see?"

"I am going to spend the day with Claire."

"Then I trust, Bernicia, you will have spirit enough, and kindness enough, to say a few words for me."

"You have stood by me, Harry, very well. I am your loving sister, and will do your pleasure whenever, and wherever, and however I can."

"It is with Claire entirely. I love her to extremity. I am determined to marry her."

"You have heard that from her baby days she has been betrothed to a gentleman called Hutton."

"What do I care for the gentleman called Hutton? In spite of the dead and the living, I will marry her."

"It shall not be my fault, Harry, if you fail."

"Bernicia, what shall I give you for your kindness?"

"You may give me two kisses, if you will not touch my bonnet. Am I not very handsome this morning; take care, sir, you will crush the pink bow under my chin."

"You are very kind and very handsome, and your beauty becomes you as the roses become the brier bush?"

"Thank you, Harry! 'Tis a pretty compliment, sir. I will cry your praises, sir, for it, do not doubt. Give me leave now to say good morning! for Claire is in trouble, and she sends for me."

"Tell her I love her with a noble madness—that I have no reason left in my love."

"She will be afraid of such 'noble madness,' I think. Claire's nature is so gentle that love will burn gently in it; in truth, my dear Harry, its flame will be most like incense on an altar."

"For this very cause, I give her such transcendent passion. The fearful love that trembled in her eyes when I began to speak of love, kindled in my heart a flame as mighty as it is invisible. Tell her these things; say that the sun will weary of rising ere I weary of loving her; say that if I saw her every day, and all the day, yet every day would still be the first, and I should long to see her more; say that there is not a letter in her name but has a special charm to draw me to her feet; say——"

"Indeed, Harry, I should need your tongue to speak so convincingly; but trust me no more, if I do not teach her that she loves you. Who should be loved but you?"

"Then haste, Bernicia, and do not fail to notice how she looks, and what she says, and if you see her weep, kiss every tear away for me."

Bernicia's first interview was, however, with madame. She had heard the approach of a carriage, and rose to meet her visitor. Bernicia was a momentary disappointment. "I thought it was Harry," she said. "Have you at last remembered the way to Bloomsbury Square? Ah, child, child! could you find nothing else to do in the country but breed quarrels and make mischief, and take good men from their business to undo your foolishness?"

"It was not my fault, grandmother."

"I cannot believe that it was George's fault."

"Then it was Lord Rashleigh's fault."

"A good thing for my lord that he challenged George, and not your brother Harry. If he had called out Harry, Harry would have made him eat the last word of his challenge. *Challenge, indeed!*"

"George is no coward, grandmother."

"Oh, no! George stood by his principle."

"And Lord Rashleigh is a man of honour."

"They are, then, it seems, both men of honour. Honour! Honour is as good a shield as principle, it appears."

"Lord Rashleigh is the finest swordsman in London."

"We will except Harry."

"And he put our welfare before his own gratification; for I have no doubt it would have gratified him hugely to have had Mr. George Abney at his sword's point."

"We are all much obliged to Lord Rashleigh for

considering our welfare. All the same, someone showed the white feather."

"Are you sorry there was no duel, grandmother?"

"Is it your place to question your elders, miss? Go upstairs to Claire. She is sick, or she has the vapours. I know not what is the matter. Girls are now past understanding. When I was a girl I was never sick or whimsied. Have you seen Harry this morning?"

"Yes. He, too, is sick or whimsied. The young men also, it seems, grandmother, are now past understanding. They used to love, and fight, and marry, and stand by their word with their life, or else all the old men I have met are liars. Lord Brander says all the young men are fools; wisdom and virtue dwell with the old men. 'Tis a mercy the old men are like old dogs, and don't learn new tricks. If they did, what would become of the world?"

"Bernicia, you are talking rubbish to me," and madame lifted her knitting, and began to attentively count her stitches.

So Bernicia went slowly upstairs. She had a mischievous smile on her face, but she could not escape, without a direct exercise of her will, the influence of the house. It was as still as if the very walls and furniture were asleep. To have opened Claire's door with rapidity would have seemed an act of violence, and she entered the room with her whole being on tip-toe. Claire was unconscious of her entry. She lay on a sofa drawn before a fire, wrapped in a white shawl, and apparently asleep. Her face was white, and had that look of fragility which a flower has when it droops upon its stem.

Bernicia's eyes filled with tears, and when Claire suddenly looked up at her, she fell on her knees and gathered her in her arms, and cried over her with girlish abandonment. "Why did you not tell me you were sick, Claire? Why did you not send for me?" she cried. "Oh, my dear, my dear, what is the matter with you?"

"I am just weak and weary, Bernicia. It has been such a sad summer. The days have been years long. I thought you would never come."

"I am ashamed of myself. We have all been behaving badly, and you have had to bear the consequences—you, and poor Harry, who is as miserable as a man can be."

"He comes to see madame, but I cannot see him," and she covered her white face with her hands, and wept behind them.

"It is a shame! It is Uncle William's fault. Never mind, I shall tell him the truth about himself, before long. Claire, listen! I have a message for you, if I can find the words Harry sent. They were to tell you that he has but one longing left, to see your face, and hear your voice; that he comes here that he may feel himself near you; that you are the woman of all his hopes and dreams, the treasure of his soul, the fire of his heart, the life of his life. He speaks no more of Cresswell, nor of the court, nor of play, nor of fashion, nor of beauty; all his talk is of you. His eyes, and ears, and heart are full of your perfections; indeed, Claire, he has left his heart with you, and carries round with him an empty casket. These seem foolish words, dear, but they are the wisest I can find. If I could coin new ones, I might

perhaps tell better how Harry loves you. I wish to Heaven I had a lover half so tender and so sensible. Fire and water should not separate us ; no, nor word of man or woman ; nor bond nor honour."

"Your word of honour, Bernicia, you could not break that."

"Oh, indeed, there are few words whose honour is worth dying for. Uncle William took you at an advantage, when you knew not what to say or what to do. You are a little coward, Claire. When he stepped between you and Harry why did you run away?"

"I was afraid. I was told by a look to go, and I had never disobeyed all my life."

"Claire, you know that Harry loves you and lives for you. Is he not equally in your heart? Yes, he is, dear. I know it ; and you know it ; and if you will confess so much of the truth to me, I will be your friend in this matter. I am not afraid of Uncle William."

Blushes bright and rosy wavered over Claire's brow and cheeks, a smile parted her lips, and the eyes she lifted to Bernicia were beaming with tenderness and hope. The girls kissed each other, and in the kiss the secret was sweetly shared. Then followed one of those long, sympathetic confidences which take the sting out of womanly sorrows. Bernicia put off her taffeta sacque and petticoat, and put on a chamber wrap of flannel ; she drew a stool to the side of the sofa, and at Claire's request, "began at the beginning," about Harry's interview with the king, about the joyous first evening of his pardon and freedom ; about the quarrel of Rashleigh and George, and the duel

which was not fought. Of these affairs Claire had heard in general ; but all their interesting little details were new to her.

Thus Bernicia described everything that had been said and done. They talked over the part Mr. Whitefield had taken, and Lord Pomfret's interference, and the attitude assumed by George Abney and William Bouverie. Perhaps Bernicia was a little hard on George, and Claire did not defend him very warmly ; for a case between moral principle and physical bravery is almost prejudged. Women at any rate approve the first, and adore the latter ; and both girls, at the end, came to madame's opinion, that Lord Rashleigh would have been forced to fight if he had challenged Harry instead of George ; and both felt a thrill of satisfaction in this decision.

By the time Bernicia had told her story she was hungry. She ordered lunch to be brought upstairs, and Claire was astonished to find herself enjoying its delicacies. So far Claire had questioned and listened, and Bernicia talked. After lunch, Bernicia began to question. Had Claire seen Harry in his new wine-coloured suit ; or his blue velvet laced with silver ; or his court dress of white satin embroidered in gold ? "Harry," she said, "had always visited madame in his fineries, and she knew it was only because he hoped Claire would also see him."

Claire shook her head. "I always heard his coach," she answered sadly, "and I longed to go to my window, but it would not have been right. Sometimes I walked about the floor too miserable to sit still ; and sometimes I laid myself on my bed and buried my face in my pillow and cried bitterly."

"I should have moved the blind, and looked at him through the window, Claire. Any woman but you would have done so. Poor Harry! He has been lifting his hat and wasting his love looks on mere wood and glass, for he always looked up and bowed toward your windows on his coming and going."

When it was mid-afternoon there was a little lull in the conversation, and after a few minutes' pause, Claire said, "We have been so happy, and our talk of Harry has been so sweet, that I would not name any other person with him. But there is another, Bernicia, and this is what makes me so wretched. Mr. Hutton has come home. He dines with us nearly every afternoon, and our marriage is talked about in that settled way so impossible to contradict. It is killing me, Bernicia."

"You will never marry him. When Fate was looking forward one day, she named you for Harry Cresswell. Look you, Claire! You ought to speak up, and speak out. What kind of a creature has this Mr. Hutton grown into?"

"He is nothing like Harry."

"Of course he is nothing like Harry. Who is to be compared with Harry? Claire, I have a new idea. Do you mind being too sick to come down to dinner to-night?"

"I shall be most glad to remain in my room."

"Do so, then; it will suit my idea exactly. Now I am going to make myself killingly handsome, for I hope to have the honour of enchaining Mr. Hutton. Mr. Oliver Augustus Hutton, is it not? I am glad I wore my rose taffeta; it is so vastly becoming to me."

To dress herself was always a satisfying occupation

to Bernicia, and she took a special delight in the business at this time. Claire, full of a calm content, lay watching her accomplish her intention, and she thought as the business proceeded that she had never seen Bernicia so lovely and so ready for conquest. Her rose taffeta sacque fell in a graceful demitrain behind, but was short enough in front to reveal pretty heeled shoes, trimmed with rose ribbons and silver buckles. Her fawn-coloured petticoat was embroidered with roses. Fine lace shaded her neck and arms, and her long, black hair fell in a studied disorder that was very charming. And these things were only the frame to a face of bewitching loveliness, and a figure of exquisite grace and proportions.

"Am I not most engaging?" she cried, spreading out her skirts, and making Claire a low courtesy. Her eyes danced with mirth, her cheeks were brilliant with colour, her mouth rosy and pouting. "I will tell you, Claire," she continued, "that I dressed myself this morning hoping that by some chance I might be seen by George. Is his presence to be hoped for?"

"I fear not. I wish indeed that he could see you. What will you do to him?"

"Make him utterly miserable. I should like of all things to put him in a passion. If I do speak to him, I shall speak only of the unfought duel. I shall talk of it in all its lights, and in all my moods. I shall argue the subject with him as a pagan and a Christian, as a granddaughter and a sister, as a woman at liberty and a woman in love. I assure you I have a fine saying for every case; for the particular case of courage I have a whole set of fine sayings. I will go now and see Mr. Oliver Augustus Hutton. Eat a good dinner,

Claire, and think of Harry, then go to sleep and dream of him."

Dinner was ready when she entered the room. Madame was leaning upon her son's arm, midway between the hearth and the table. They had evidently stopped there to welcome a young man who stood bowing, and tapping his gold snuffbox, and making explanations—a tall, fair young man, with a long neck and a weak chin. When he turned and faced Bernicia, he was dumfounded. This radiant, glowing divinity was not the pale, frail virgin he expected to meet. And for a moment or two William Bouverie was also confused. Bernicia had not been in his thoughts or consideration, and her beauty struck him as if he had never seen it before. In his own mind he had resolved to make her first visit a season of reproofs, and he was not able to say one disagreeable word. On the contrary, there was a slight air of pride in his introduction of Bernicia,—“My niece, Miss Cresswell.”

Madame watched and smiled, and held her peace. She did not wonder at her son's complaisance,—she knew Beauty was omnipotent,—but she did wonder what reason Bernicia might have for her alluring attentions to young Mr. Hutton. She chattered to him and to her uncle all during the dinner hour, making both of them laugh heartily and frequently at her little impertinences of criticism, at her airs and caprices and coquetries.

And when William Bouverie had retired she gave herself up to the business of fascinating Claire's lover. She asked him to tell her about his travels, and affected ignorance of many things that he might have

the proud satisfaction of enlightening her. She pretended the greatest interest in his personal adventures. She sang for him, and she sang with him. She begged him to show her how to render a certain *legato* passage, and to teach her the trick of his trill and turn, and madame found it hard to restrain herself at her mockery of the young man's voice and manner. But he was under an enchantment. He saw, and heard, and felt only as Bernicia desired him ; the perfume of her bending face and floating hair was a kind of intoxication, and her touch on his hand, as they turned the music, thrilled him like the stirring of a new life. He lingered an hour later than usual, and left then only because it was impossible to ignore any longer madame's restless impatience. And he never once thought of Claire.

"Well, miss," said madame angrily, as soon as they were alone, "I hope I may never have to spend such another hour. I am ashamed of you. For no purpose, you have been doing evil to your friend, and to a stranger ; and let me tell you, only an ape does mischief for the joy of doing it."

"Dear grandmother, for once in your life you are all in the wrong. Whatever I have said and done tonight has been done for Claire's happiness, and for Harry's happiness. Harry adores Claire, and Claire is dying for Harry, and there is no match that could be wiser for both. As I am a woman, I can but use a woman's ways and means ; but if you will have patience, I will gladly explain myself."

"Whatever needs to be explained does not deserve to be explained."

"La, grandmother ! there are exceptions, and this is

one of them. Cresswell is indeed a magnificent home and estate, but it needs a lot of money to put it in order. True, cousin Allan is at present wearing his angel clothes, and has already sent Harry a good return. But 'good' is not enough for Harry. Harry has the family to refound, he has the castle partly to rebuild, and it must be entirely refurnished. He has the farmhouses to repair, and the land to refence and to improve. He ought to be high sheriff of Northumberland. He ought to raise a thousand men for the king, and keep the Border."

"A thousand men!"

"And call them the 'Cresswell Light Lancers.'"

"What nonsense you are talking! A thousand men! They would have nothing to do."

"You are much mistaken, grandmother. Union or no Union, do you believe the Scots will behave themselves long? They harried and worried the Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts; do you expect them to keep friends long with the Hanover people? They won't do it. And just as soon as there is trouble, it is always

" 'Northumberland hasty and hot
That prods the Scot.'

Harry is soldier enough to need the stir of arms and the hope of a fight. So are the men of his county. He will in this way get them round him. He will become their leader, and they, in return, will give him honour, and make him great."

"And pray, what has Claire to do in such a life as this? Are there any meetinghouses, any of the things to which she is accustomed, near Cresswell, to which she can turn for pleasure and comfort?"

"Claire will have Harry and her home, and Harry's church and Harry's friends. She will be very happy; and she is precisely what Harry needs, for she adores Harry to such a pitch that she will be interested in all he wishes and in all he does—in his hunting and fishing and building, his farming, and his fighting. Also, she will not be too fine for the county ladies. I assure you, they will be perfectly happy, for Harry is at heart a county squire, far more than a court loungee."

"Harry ought to marry a lady of equal birth."

"He might marry Miss Damer. She loves him entirely, and she also has lots of money; but she would keep Harry dangling about St. James's, for she is nothing at all but a pretty bauble—something for a man to hang at his watch-chain. All their money would go in gambling and dressing, and in giving great balls and dinners. Harry is already weary of that kind of life."

"There is much sense in what you say, Bernicia; but we must not lose honour in interest. Claire's money was made by her mother's father and grandfather, and they desired Claire to marry into the Hutton family. Your Uncle William solemnly promised to see their wish carried out. And he will do it, you may depend on that."

"Not if Love and I can help it. The Cresswells need Claire's money; the Huttons do not. Claire dislikes young Oliver Augustus, and she loves Harry. I am for making Harry and Claire happy."

"But how was your behaviour to-night to the purpose?"

"Oh, grandmother, it is the plainest thing in the

world! If Oliver Augustus Hutton should get it into his head and heart that he would rather *not* marry Claire,—that he would rather marry someone else,—what is uncle going to do with both parties against him? Do you not comprehend—you, that can see afar off as well as anyone? I am sure you do. So, now, I am going to talk to Uncle William.”

“Not now, miss. Your uncle is in his private room, and——”

“*Now*, of all times! I am in beauty and spirits to-night. I shall catch at advantages, and win them. Grammercy! I feel myself to be almost an angel, pitying the unhappy, and running all sorts of dangers for their welfare,” and she walked up to the large mirror between the windows and smiled to her own beauty and good-nature.

“That will do, child,” said madame. “To-night, I will think; to-morrow, there may be more to say.”

Madame had no idea that Bernicia would venture to seek an interview with her uncle. She herself respected the ever-closed door of his private room, where it was supposed all his business plans were laid and his business perplexities solved. Bernicia had no such reluctances, and “business” did not inspire her with any respect. She knocked at the inviolable door, and, receiving no answer, knocked again. Then William Bouverie said sharply, “Come in!” and she entered. He was sitting quite at his ease before a glowing fire, smoking his pipe, and there was not the slightest evidence of “business” in the comfortable apartment.

“Well, Bernicia,” he said, rising to his feet, but giving her no sign of welcome, “what do you want?”

She closed the door, and, advancing to the hearth, stood in its glow looking at him. Then he said more gently : " You must have a good excuse, Bernicia, for interfering with my privacy."

" I have, Uncle William. I want to tell you about Claire : I do not think either grandmother or you realise that she is very sick, and like to be worse unless a change is made."

" You are talking foolishly. There is nothing seriously the matter with Claire. If there was, I should not need you to tell me of it."

" You see her every day, and you do not notice the change. I was shocked by it. And, whether you like it or like it not, uncle, I must tell you—the blame is yours. Now, you cannot say that 'you did not know,' and get angry with people for not telling you."

" How am I to blame? You do not know what you are talking about."

" I think you treat Claire abominably, and she is breaking her heart about it. You have known her all her life long, yet you say to her, ' Do not dare to see, do not dare to speak to, Harry Cresswell.' You might just as well tell her, ' I do not trust you for a moment, for you are certain to lie and deceive me.' How would you like to be treated so? And the promise you extorted from her is an insult. She thought you loved and trusted her, and she is shocked to find you neither love nor trust her."

" Bernicia, will you remember to whom you are talking?"

" I remember that I am talking to William Bouverie—a man said to be fair and just, even to his debtors and his enemies. Poor Claire! What has she done

but love you so well that your anger is breaking her heart? Why cannot you trust to her love and honour? If it were I then I should not wonder, because I am wilful and disobedient; and as for breaking my heart, I would not do such a thing for your love nor for the love of any other man."

"Bernicia, I have good reason for doubting Claire. Harry was making love to her when I stepped between them and sent Claire to her room."

"Is that all? How could Harry help making love to a beautiful girl in the same house with him? A poor spirited man he would be had he not made love to her."

"But Claire looked as if she liked and approved his folly."

"Pray, sir, what woman does not like and approve such folly? That poor creature, Mr. Hutton, made love to me an hour ago, and I looked as if I liked and approved him."

"Then you ought not to have done so. And if Mr. Hutton made love to you he is, I think, something of a scoundrel. You are mistaken."

"He was awkward enough in his attempts; but he meant them for love-making, there is no doubt of that."

"He is, as you know, engaged to marry Claire."

"I know nothing certain of that subject."

"Claire was promised to him by her parents. I made the promise for her, and I regard it as sacred."

"Promised! The promise is a dead promise. It is twenty years old. Everything is changed since it was made. It is high time it was forgotten."

"Her parents doubtless remember it, and Claire must keep their wish and my word."

"I should not think they remember anything about it. If heaven is the gloriously happy place Mr. Whitefield says it is, they must have long ago forgotten this dreary world. Beside, as you know, sir, there is no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven."

"The thing comes to this, Bernicia. Harry is in love with Claire's money."

"You are far wrong, uncle. Harry is in love with Claire. As far as Harry is concerned, you may take her money and make a rattle of it. You have no right to judge Harry by your own fears and doubts, and you have no right to make Claire ill and unhappy for a dead promise. Do you think more of your own word than of Claire's life? You are most supremely selfish if you do."

He remained silent after this accusation, and Bernicia stood silent before him. She had one foot on the fender, her pretty robe was gathered over her left arm, and her eloquent eyes steadily regarded her uncle. His face was cast downward; he fingered slowly his great bunch of gold seals, and he appeared to have forgotten Bernicia's presence. Thus they remained for about five minutes. Bernicia thought it was an hour. Then William Bouverie stood up and said with some impatience :

"Tell Claire I wish to speak to her. And never come to this room again, Bernicia. I consider your intrusion to-night a great impertinence, miss."

"No, uncle, I am not impertinent. I am only brave, and bravery belongs to the family. And yet in this matter I am not very brave, because I knew I need not fear to come to you with a right thing or a kind thing. And that is all there is about it, sir."

In half an hour, while Claire and Bernicia were still talking over this interview, William Bouverie came to them. He sat down beside Claire and drew her within his arm.

"My dear daughter," he said, "Bernicia tells me I have been unkind to you. Is it so?"

"You have doubted me, sir, and scarcely spoken to me, and I have been very lonely and miserable."

"Then I will now fully trust you. You may see Sir Harry Cresswell whenever you wish. You may walk with him and talk with him as you desire. I have always objected to your visiting at Lady Pomfret's house. You may now accept any invitation Bernicia gives you. If I extorted any promise from you regarding Sir Harry Cresswell I give it back. I trust entirely to your honour. For the next six months you have absolute freedom to go where you wish and to do as you wish. All I ask is that you give Augustus Hutton such opportunities to win your favour as are just and reasonable. At the end of six months I am sure you will be ready to fulfil the promise I made to your dying father and mother for you. Have I not tried to take their place, Claire? Have I failed to be ever kind and just and generous to you?"

"You have been the best of fathers. I love you with all my heart."

"Then, my dear, remember that obedience is better than sacrifice." With these words he kissed her, and, turning to Bernicia, asked: "Are you ready now for family worship? I am going to the parlour."

"I beg you to excuse me, uncle," she answered. "I will remain with Claire, who, as you may see, needs what strength and comfort I can give her."

So he went, but it was with an air of great depression. And madame knew that he was in trouble, because he did not read the portion of the Scriptures that was in order, but turned for comfort to the Book of Psalms—a thing which he always did when in any way afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate. After the dismissal of the servants he remained a long time with madame, but she evidently gave him little sympathy, for he left her presence with a still deeper air of depression and disappointment. It was not, however, unmixed. There was a certain stubbornness in his face and erect figure which indicated that he had not abandoned his position, but rather changed his base, in order more surely to protect it.

But whatever plans or projects he carried in his own mind, Claire was unsuspecting of them. He left only hope and peace in her heart, and very soon after his departure the girls, being thoroughly wearied with their day of emotion, went to sleep in each other's arms.

In the morning there was a general disposition to avoid conversation. Madame took her breakfast alone, Claire and Bernicia took theirs together in Claire's sitting room, and William Bouverie was glad to let the discussion grow cold before there was any opportunity to reopen the subject. Madame had much the same feeling. When Bernicia's coach was at the door she went to her grandmother, but found her in a mood that repelled all questioning. Bernicia thought her coldness and indifference more than necessary, even if they were assumed in order to prevent premature discussion. She made her adieux with some offence :

"I am as cross as the rest, this morning, grandmother," she said; "we are not a happy and amiable family. I fear, indeed, we are a self-willed, selfish lot."

"Speak for yourself, miss," answered madame sharply, and Bernicia left the room to the irritable note. It was no wonder that the old porter's deliberation made her impatient. She put him and his attentions aside with an air of pique and displeasure, and entered her coach with a feeling that she had been badly used, and her efforts for everyone's good not properly appreciated. Consequently, she was in a bad temper, and this was unfortunate for George, who was just entering the square in a hackney coach. He was returning from Gloucester, weary with his long ride, and not at that moment thinking of Bernicia.

But she was thinking of him; she was putting his absence to the list of her other annoyances, and unjustly laying the sum total of them on a lover who had not divined the probability of her visit and been there to meet her.

"He is never there when I want to see him, and I do not care if I never see him again," she muttered. "He knew when Wednesday came, and he ought to have been watching for me *every* Wednesday until he did see me." Then hearing the approach of a vehicle, she lifted her eyes and saw George sitting straight and severe-looking in it. His eyes were fixed upon his home; but the next moment he recognised Bernicia's coach. She saw him speak to his driver and she understood he was going to alight and accost her.

Then the contradictory nature of her liking asserted itself, and she touched the little bell which directed

her coachman to drive faster, so that before George could step to the ground she had passed him. On her face there was a look of calm indifference, and her eyes looked over and beyond the hack and its occupant. It was impossible for George to decide whether she had recognised him or not, but the uncertainty made him wretched enough.

Bernicia also was unhappy. Her ill-nature reacted on herself; she was sorry she had given way to the petty impulse. She believed that she had wounded George, and despite her pretended indifference she suffered with him. "I am in love with the fear of being in love," she thought. "It is a most troublesome condition. I wish that I had stayed longer with Claire. He ought to have returned yesterday; it is his own fault. I will not think of him at all." In such distraction and desire she reached home and found her sister dressed for the park, but looking gloomily out of the window at the lowering sky.

"Is it going to rain, Bernicia?" she asked impatiently. "I have dressed myself in my new cloak and pink ridinghood, and I hope I may wear them safely."

"Indeed, Fanny, I think the weather is going to show us what it can do in the way of temper. It is blowing north, and east, and cold, and vapours, and dust."

"Then I will not ride. There is not a month in the year whose honour you can trust. Never country had such a wild, capricious climate. I will go to Italy. I will go to the tropics."

"You will live and die in London, Fan."

"What have you to tell of the Bloomsbury people?"

"Nothing to make a talk over. They live in a circle, and go round and round. I saw the young gentleman who proposes to marry Claire Abney and her gold. Harry has nothing to fear from him—he is too tall, too fair, too everything that is not desirable."

"How old is he?"

"About twenty-five years of age, and about ten of understanding."

"So much for him, then!" and she took a pinch of snuff from a jewelled box open on the table and scattered the powder on the floor; "so much for him. La, Bernicia! there is nothing in nothing, so far as I can see."

"Well, I did something toward Harry's success," and Bernicia related the conversation with her uncle and its results. But she was just then out of sympathy with her subject, and she threw no interest into her recital. So Fanny paid little attention to her report, though she laughed a little at Bernicia's meddling.

"It is a wonder that Uncle William did not turn Turk," she answered. "*Tush!* Let their quarrels come and go as they please for a while. I am tired of them. To-night we are to dine with the Capels, and we shall meet fools and folly enough to put yesterday's fools and folly out of our talk and memory."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREATEST PLEASURE OF LIFE IS LOVE.

AFTER this arrangement Bernicia and Claire were much together, and the companionship was conducive alike to their pleasure and the enlargement of their ideas regarding life. They got wider and more reasonable views of both sides of social existence. Each had been accustomed to regard the other's surroundings with contempt or disapproval ; and Claire was brightened by the variety and vivacity of Bernicia's life, while Bernicia was made more thoughtful and more calm by a frequent contact with ideas of vital and unchanging interest.

The innate piety of Claire's nature kept her a mere looker-on, but she was a pleased and a tolerant one, and nobody was offended by her piety, for it was as much a part of Claire as colour is a part of the rose or perfume of the violet. Lord Pomfret liked "the little saint," he said frankly ; "she is an angelical creature." Lady Pomfret did not deny this opinion, but thought it a fault in a woman who owned so much of the world not to go into the world and be more like the world. But Bernicia was sure it would be as unnatural to see Claire wandering about the gay places of society as to see Lent lilies gadding over the walls and fences like woodbines. All alike, however, were aware of the value of Claire's influence over

Harry, and of the immense advantage her wealth would be to the Cresswell estate.

She kept her contract with her guardian to its last tittle ; she was even scrupulously careful to give Augustus Hutton the "fair and reasonable opportunities" stipulated for. In order to do this it was necessary he should visit her at the Pomfret mansion, and the young man received her ladyship's invitation to do so. He soon made good, on his own account, the favour accorded at first for Claire's sake ; for it was impossible to resist his amiable desire to please. He was every beautiful woman's servant—ready at all hours, and at all expenditure or trouble, to do her pleasure.

The gay, splendid, witty women of fashion and rank, whom he now met for the first time, were a new kind of womanhood to him. He was in love with everyone he met. He learned how to dance, that he might please Bernicia ; Miss Damer easily persuaded him to take a hand at cards with her. The life he saw in Piccadilly seemed, of all lives, the most desirable ; and, as he dressed with great richness and in the height of the mode, and was ever ready to be obliging, the women of Lady Pomfret's set soon made a pet and a convenience of him. They sent him on their messages and told him their love secrets, and in many ways treated him more like a womanly friend and confidant than a lover or a visitor.

Augustus was quite pleased with the position assigned him. He believed himself to be an object of envy to other men, and was scarcely jealous of Harry, though Harry looked upon his pretensions with unconcealed contempt. Between men so equally

disdainful of each other even Claire had no difficulty in keeping peace ; or, if any prospect of trouble appeared, Bernicia was sufficient for the occasion.

Frequently Claire returned to Bloomsbury for a few days, but the change appeared to give no one pleasure. Harry would only visit her during the middle of the day, when his uncle was in the city, and Mr. Hutton did not value his exclusive privileges in the evenings. He was sighing all the time for the pleasures and the company at Lady Pomfret's. Mme. Bouverie was not anxious for her society, for when she was not present Harry's visits were entirely her own. She had little confidences with him, and there were favours between them no one knew of. In fact, madame was jealous of Harry's love and attention, and, though she tolerated Claire as a necessity for his welfare, she was not happy in Claire's happiness. And if George missed his sister, he was glad to think of her as constantly in Bernicia's society, for she would surely find many opportunities to plead his cause. So, then, there were few motives drawing her to Bloomsbury and many pleasant ones drawing her to Piccadilly.

Harry was in Piccadilly nearly all day long, and she had also Bernicia's confidence and sympathy. There, someone was always near to love her, and to feel an interest in what she thought, or in what she was doing or going to do. And to pass from this atmosphere of light and love and movement to the stillness and method and repression of the life in Bloomsbury was not a pleasing change. As the months went on, it was made less and less frequently, and at every visit she found the difference more pro-

nounced. Madame said "it was in herself," which was likely. She pointed out the slight accommodations to court fashion made in her dress, speech, and manners, and declared that "in another year Claire would be outwardly a woman of the world." And Claire, who knew that her heart was right with Heaven, was grieved to find herself judged by the colour of her ribbons, or the make of her stomacher, or the trimming of her bonnet.

If Claire went little to Bloomsbury, Bernicia went less. She would not remain all night there, because she had no intention of giving George any advantage from those softer moments which assail every woman. She would not appear to seek a reconciliation with him, and George's advances in this direction had been singularly unfortunate. Twice, when he called at Lady Pomfret's, the ladies were really out, and the third time Bernicia and Fanny were in the midst of a sisterly quarrel, and not disposed to have it interfered with. This particular time he had seen the coachman lounging in the yard, and so was sure the ladies were at home; consequently he believed that he had been on all three occasions refused admittance. And he was far too proud to subject himself to another refusal.

But Lord Rashleigh, who saw her frequently, was no more fortunate, though he took pains to arrange their meeting at such times as he thought would be favourable. Thus Bernicia and Claire were usually at Lady Huntington's Sunday night service, and Lord Rashleigh was never absent. But the mood induced by the preacher's eloquent appeals was not one favourable to him. For in these weeks Bernicia was passing through an experience that no man or woman could

have depended upon. She was struggling against selfishness and folly toward the heights of that pure life she really longed for—stumbling, falling, mistaking her way, longing for light, even while plunging willingly into deeper darkness. Claire, who was the only witness of this interior life, pitied the girl greatly ; she was familiar with her heavenly desires and her constant failures ; and she perceived the misery of an existence which was a sustained spiritual defeat. But Claire had been born with good instincts,—there was even a touch of Pharisaism in her spotless piety,—and it was therefore impossible for even Claire to quite understand the longings and the despairs which made her friend's soul their battleground.

After one of Mr. Whitefield's electric "calls" Bernicia was usually in a condition of determined self-denial, resolved to give up all that could lead her heart astray. And she was afraid of Lord Rashleigh in two respects—he would either put her in a passion, or he would lead her thoughts far from the higher subjects on which she was determined to settle them. Had Lord Rashleigh known her better, he would have avoided making himself the special temptation of her best moments. And yet—though such calculation was far beyond him—his constant disappointments were working in Bernicia's heart a pity, not far from that akin to love. She wondered at his persistence, not understanding that to a man of Lord Rashleigh's temper, the weekly disappointment was a weekly spur and incentive ; and that he left Lady Huntington's every Sunday night more and more determined to win the girl who so continuously foiled his intentions and frustrated his hopes.

From these general events it is easy to imagine the usual trend of events in the lives of the two girls during some weeks ; Claire's especially being of that calm, satisfied character which accompanies love affairs thoroughly understood and full of happiness and hope. Bernicia, indeed, was often irritated by the complacencies of Harry's and Claire's affection. "Why do you not quarrel a little with him?" she asked. "A lover that is always satisfied and always smiling is too comfortable to be endurable. Break off your engagement, if only that you may have the pleasure of renewing it again. You weary me with your contentments." But Claire, whose ideal life was in green pastures and by still waters, could not bear to even think of a frown on Harry's face, or of a shadow on their love.

On the Sunday night before Christmas there was a decided move in Bernicia's love affairs. It was a stormy night, with a high wind and heavy rain, and quite unfit for any expedition abroad. After dinner, therefore, Lady Pomfret said, as she owed herself about sixty hours of sleep, she would lie down on the sofa and pay a little on account, "and you girls can take care of Lord Pomfret," she added. "He will not be very ill-natured if you let him finish his pipe in peace."

So for an hour Lord Pomfret sat on the hearth smoking and thinking, and Lady Pomfret lay with closed eyes among her cushions ; and Bernicia made pictures in the fire, and Claire read at a little table, where there was a branch of shaded candles. Lord Pomfret made the first movement. He put his pipe down, and looked at Bernicia. "Suppose you read a little to me now," he said ; and she answered, "I

am most willing. Shall I get the *Gentleman's Magazine*, or the 'History of Christina of Sweden,' or the 'Account of Admiral Anson's Last Voyage'?"

"I will listen to no more of Admiral Anson's extravagant stories. Do you believe them? To-night I was thinking of Mr. Whitefield, and of what he said and what he read. If you have a Bible at hand, I will listen to it for half an hour."

Without much heart she got the desired book, and opening it at random, lighted on the story of King David and his son Absalom. Lord Pomfret listened with great interest and attention until the young man has paid the penalty of his treason and filial disloyalty. Then he said excitedly: "By all that's true! it is the history of George II. and his son Frederick, Prince of Wales! But there would be no mourning for Frederick if he died; his father would only say 'Thank God he is gone!' Now, Claire, you shall read me a portion."

Then Claire turned the pages of her New Testament, and read the verses describing the temptation of Christ after his forty days fasting in the wilderness. This incident interested Lord Pomfret still more.

"The devil took Christ to the top of a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time?" he asked.

Claire read the verse again.

"And he promised to give the power and glory of them to Christ if he would worship him?"

"He did, sir."

"And he said he *could* give them, because they were his to give."

"That is what he said, sir."

"And you will observe that Christ did not deny this claim of the devil. So, then, he really acknowledged the devil's authority in this world, and his right to give it to whom he chose. That makes some things very clear, Miss Abney, and accounts for the prosperity of so many wicked men and women. It is the gift of the devil."

"If you please, not so, brother," said Bernicia. "What a libel on all our class! Are the rich and the great, then, but pensioners of the devil?"

"That is what it appears. This Bible is a wonderful book. I shall never be weary of it."

"Your deduction in this case is all wrong, sir," said Claire. She was smiling and turning the leaves of her Bible as she spoke, and, in a moment, she brought it to Lord Pomfret and said: "There is the answer: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein' (Psalm xxiv. 1), and as for the devil's word, hear what St. John says it is worth," and she turned the pages again and read: "'He is a liar and the father of it'" (John viii. 44).

In the midst of this discussion—for Lord Pomfret pretended to hold firmly to his first impression—there was the sound of wheels in the court, and Claire had difficulty in answering her opponent. She was listening for Harry's footsteps, and yet she said, "I do not think it is Harry, for to-night he is nursing Captain Ball, who was stabbed in the throat by a highwayman a week ago."

Bernicia was not interested. "It is Harry, of course," she said. "He has remembered you and found Captain Ball tiresome. Love is stronger than friendship."

But it was not Harry. When the door opened it admitted Lord Rashleigh. He had removed his cloak, but he showed signs of the storm, and very gladly put himself within the heat of the blazing fire. Lord Pomfret took up again the subject they had been discussing, and Rashleigh tried to feel an interest in it, but failed. He was watching Bernicia, who had taken Claire's seat at the table, and whose eyes were on the open book, though she was not reading a word. She had answered his salutation with a courtesy, and then retired from the conversation. All attempts to draw her into it again failed, and Lord Rashleigh perceived that he must take some decided step if he would obtain any satisfactory interview.

"I am going to Rashleigh Court to keep Christmas," he said. "Whether I shall return to London or not is uncertain. I may go at once to Italy."

He looked at Bernicia as he made this statement, but she heard it with the indifference of one who has neither care nor interest in the matter.

"I am very sorry," answered Lord Pomfret. "Whom shall I play with when you are gone? There is no one like you for a good long game and a heavy stake."

"I will play with you to-night, if you wish."

"No, you will not," said Lady Pomfret, rising from her sofa and coming forward with a smile. "Let me tell you, Lord Rashleigh, I keep Sunday to my mother's memory, and she could not endure a card. So I will have no play, if you please, to-night. We can have music, if it suits you. Bernicia can sing, and Miss Abney will lead us."

"I cannot sing to-night, sister. It is impossible."

"Very well, miss. No one will be sorry. Your voice is not beyond compare. Claire will be more obliging."

But Lord Rashleigh took on himself the onus of refusal. He said he thought he had taken cold in the storm, for he found himself hoarse, and would not trouble the ladies. Then, walking to the side of Bernicia, he asked her, in the hearing of all present, "if she would give him ten minutes' conversation in the morning."

There was an uncomfortable silence in the room; the question seemed to fill it, and she felt the eyes of everyone on her face. Her resolution of silence appeared petty and even cowardly. She looked into her lover's face with a steady gaze, and answered:

"I can see you to-morrow morning at half-after eleven. We do not go out until twelve, do we, Fanny?"

"The hour is indifferent to us," answered Lady Pomfret, and she began to urge him to stay all night with them. But, he said, the temptation to cards in Lord Pomfret's company would be irresistible, and he could not face it; also that he had promised Sir Harry Cresswell to call at Captain Ball's lodgings, and pass the night with them. With this explanation he went away, and Bernicia rose as soon as he disappeared, and vowed the night was stupid and she was sleepy, and that Lord Rashleigh had spoiled the most interesting conversation she had ever had.

"Let me tell you something, my pretty sister," said Lord Pomfret, as she made her good-night courtesy to him. "You are going to have a call from Good Fortune in the morning. If you are a wise girl you will not flout her away."

"Yes, miss," added Lady Pomfret, "and before you sleep to-night, do not call her names, and fancy you are talking about Lord Rashleigh. Try and remember he may any day become Marquis of Sandham, and that Rashleigh Court is one of the finest houses in all England."

"If you could only see it, Bernicia, as I did one bright summer day!" said Lord Pomfret. "It is of great size, built of gray stone, and nearly covered with ivy. The park is full of grand old oaks and dappled deer; the gardens are delightful, and on the terrace I saw about a score of peacocks spreading out their gorgeous feathers. Inside the furnishing is complete in every way. I cannot imagine any girl longing for a fairer home."

"I am not longing to marry a home, sir."

"Oh, take your own way, sister! I only told you of the home to help the man. To-night he was forlorn and despondent; and I should think Lord Rashleigh would suit a proud girl like you down to the very ground."

"He does not suit me."

"Well, well! I speak for your good, and you need not fire up to your finger ends. Women pass my understanding."

"Dear me, John! No one expects you to understand them," said Lady Pomfret, turning suddenly upon her lord. "Good-night, Bernicia! Let me kiss you into a reasonable temper. If Lord Rashleigh only knew how to time his love-making it might be catching, but men have no intelligence in such matters. I am provoked at him. It is his own fault."

The next day had been appointed for the decora-

tion of the house for Christmas, and when Lord Rashleigh called, everyone was busy in that direction. Lady Pomfret and Claire sat in an inner parlour, surrounded by holly, mistletoe, and rowan berries, which they were tying into wreaths and ornaments ; and in the large outer room Bernicia and Jackanapes were winding garlands round the pictures, and setting up little boughs and bunches about the walls and the silver sconces.

Bernicia turned from her pleasant work toward the door as Lord Rashleigh entered the room. Her arms were full of laurel ; there was a spray of white mistletoe berries in her black hair, and sprays of red rowan berries at her breast and belt ; and she stood among the boxwood and ivy with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, the very spirit of Christmas. Lord Rashleigh also had something of the happy time about him. The crisp frosty morning had reddened his cheeks, and his rapid ride had given him an air of life and expectation ; and though dressed for the saddle only, the dress was very becoming, and added that touch of robust manliness which he seemed to lack in the splendour of velvet and satin.

He advanced smiling, with outstretched hands, but Bernicia took advantage of the green emblems which encumbered her own and, glancing down at them, made a courtesy in acknowledgment of his greeting. Then he turned to Jackanapes, slipped a piece of silver in his hand, and sent him to stand at his horse's head. They were then alone, and there was a look of determination on Lord Rashleigh's face Bernicia had never before seen there. It instantly roused in her a resolve to hold her own at all points, and she met his eager

gaze with one of enquiry and curiosity, cold, calm, and wonderfully captivating.

"Bernicia !"

"Miss Cresswell, if you are speaking to me, Lord Rashleigh."

"Bernicia ! Bernicia ! You know why I am here."

"I am too stupid even to guess at your lordship's 'whys.' You have done things lately which I could not have supposed you would have done ; you have left undone other things I should have thought you would have done at the peril of your life."

"All I have done, all I have left undone, has one reason—my love for you."

"I will shoulder none of your shortcomings ; and you told me plainly you did *not* love me."

"I did not mean it."

"You said it."

"Then let me unsay it all my life long. Be my wife, and I will tell you every hour that I do love you ; that I only live to love you."

"Such a life would be extremely stupid. What are protestations worth ? Actions speak louder than words."

"Tell me what I must *do*, then."

"I do not live to order your lordship's life."

"Ah, but you do ! And you shall ! for unless you order my life I am but a dead man. How soon will you forgive me for not killing Mr. Abney ?"

"I would never forgive you if you did kill him."

"Grant me patience ! What do you desire of me ?"

"That you would bid me good-morning. You see that I am full of business."

"Tell me, first, how I have offended you."

She threw down the wreaths and stuck her small hands together. "Yes, I will," she answered. "You made me an excuse for your bad temper and bad tongue; you threw a quarrel at Mr. Abney for my sake, and then backed out of it. You insulted me once, twice, thrice, in the garden at Richmond. You said then plainly you did not believe in me, you did not trust me, you did not love me. Shall I take your word now, when you say you do love me? It is not worth while. I do not believe in *you* now. I do not trust you. I do not love you."

"Yet you shall believe in me, you shall trust me, you shall love me. I vow it!"

"There is no power in heaven or earth to so compel me."

"Oh, but there is! There is omnipotent Love. Bernicia, you are so exquisite, so charming, beyond all comparison, that I would rather live and die trying to win you than have the love of all other women. Your disdain cannot offend me. Your cruelty cannot weary me. When Christmas is over I shall go away from you, out of England altogether, until my twelve months' pledge is over. Then I shall come back and give Mr. Abney a lesson in good behaviour, and——"

"Pshaw! I do not believe that the men of this day would quarrel with a dog that bit them."

"And then I shall see you again."

"And then—you will awake. Pray let me hear no more. Boasting is a contemptible thing."

"Let me boast, at least, of one kind word before I go away. Wish me a merry Christmas."

"I wish that to all the world, sir, and I have no desire to except you."

"Hang it, Bernicia! Can you not make the wish a little kinder?"

His persistence and good nature were irresistible. She smiled, and when an angry woman smiles she has lost the grip of her temper.

"By my soul, sweet girl! I shall be most miserable if you send me away without one word of hope."

"I have been very angry with you."

"Faith! I deserve your anger. I do, indeed."

"You treated me most shamefully."

"It is most true, and I am most sorry for it. Forgive me."

"If I did forgive you, then you would presume a thousand favours."

"I would presume one, which would include all others. I would say, if you forgave me, Bernicia Cresswell, be my wife."

"Then I will not forgive you."

"You mean you will not be my wife?"

"Read my words just so."

"Not yet. Tell me again the very truth. Will you marry me when I come back, a little later? Think, beloved one! do not be in a hurry or in a passion. One year from now? Two years, then—five years? Say yes! Say yes! Say yes, before I go!"

"I say, no!"

He regarded her steadily with beaming eyes and an eager, questioning look. Her heart softened under his gaze, but the faint, scornful smile on her lips belied her heart, and he saw no hope beneath it.

Yet he lifted the hand nearest to his own, and, pressing it to his lips, asked once more :

"Are you sure it is 'no'?" and she answered in a low voice, as she withdrew her hand from his : "I am sure it is 'no.'"

Then he went away, but when he had closed the door he reopened it, swept her a bow with his hat to the very floor, and, looking bravely into her face, said with a confident air and manner :

"Miss Cresswell, sometime your 'no' shall be 'yes.'"

The door was then closed with a determined clash, and she was wretched. She longed to call him back. She ran to the window and watched him mount his horse, and thought how handsome he was, and how his riding suit became him, and she hoped he would glance up ere he left the courtyard. If he did, she resolved to give him a smile that would recompense him for all her hard words, perhaps even bring him back to her presence. But he gathered up the reins, gave the ostler a piece of money and a few words which brought a smile to the man's face, and then galloped out of the gates and down the road as if he were riding for his life.

"He is a kind soul," she thought regretfully. "He must have remembered Jasper's Christmas wish, as well as his gift, for Jasper hardly ever smiles at anyone." Then she went back to her wreath-hanging, but all pleasure had passed out of the work, and she knew that whatever Christmas might mean for others, it was spoiled for her. Presently Lady Pomfret entered. She had heard Lord Rashleigh gallop away, and as Bernicia did not come to her, she had a shrewd guess as to the result of the interview.

"Well, miss?" she asked, "have you sent your lover away in a tantrum? He galloped like it."

"It is not my fault, Fanny, if people have unreasonable tempers."

"So you have said 'no.' You will say that word once too often, if you do not take care."

"Do not trouble about me, Fanny. I am all in a tremble, and out of spirits."

"It stands to reason so. But take your own sweet will, miss; you will be sorry enough, some day."

"No, I shall not, Fanny. There now, I will say no more on the subject. I can hold my own very well."

"Hoity-toity! What a little huff we are in! I'll warrant you have both been giving each other the rough side of your tongues. And here is Harry again! I wish to goodness he would get married to Claire and be done with it. Is not all this love-making a little tiresome? Come and let us have some cold beef and a custard."

"Anything, anything, Fanny, but love and kisses. I am sick of the whole jargon. If women had the choosing of husbands they would make a far simpler matter of it than men make of choosing wives."

"Do not imagine such a calamity. Fancy what Lord Pomfret or Lord Rashleigh would be if you or I had chosen them! What airs they would give themselves! What contradictions and complaisances we should have to endure! They would give us kisses as a favour, and we should have to beg them for a smile or a little attention. And could you imagine what Lord Pomfret would be if two ladies were quarrelling about him? My dear, the round world would not hold him. No, no! Thank Heaven we have the power to say

'no.' When we lose it the world will turn topsy-turvy. Come, the beef and custard waits. I dare be bound Lord Rashleigh has gone straight to his club and ordered a steak. Do you hear Harry? How he is laughing! When will he get married, I wonder? Let us hurry the affair forward. What do you say? Lord Pomfret is mightily tired of so much of it."

"I say so. Talk to Harry to-day about it. I shall advise Claire."

"Can you manage Claire? I think not."

"Her heart has doubtless weakened her reason. It is always good-morning to the head when the heart is busy."

"Then reason for her. After Christmas it will be *Heigho!* for something to do and to worry about."

But it was not easy reasoning with Claire against her conscience. She had one answer for all the arguments Lady Pomfret, Bernicia, and Harry could bring: "My promise has been given for six months. I can take no step till that time is over." On this position she stood firm as a rock, and was even a little disagreeably resolute on the matter; "sullen," Bernicia thought, when she would no longer discuss it. Then Harry turned traitor and stood by Claire, and said "she was right, and that, for his part, he was ashamed he had permitted his desires to put aside his honour for a moment." And there was a little coolness for a day or two, and Claire suddenly determined to return to Bloomsbury for a month.

Then Bernicia went the full length and breadth of the way of pleasure. She had lovers and servants to answer her slightest smile, and she was the rage and the toast of the season. In her habit of blue

and white cloth, and attended by Colonel Derby, she showed the loungers of the Mall and the Park what a Border girl could do with a horse of dangerous mettle. She was always one of Horace Walpole's gay parties to Vauxhall. She was the beauty of the morning concerts at Ranelagh, and usually sat in her box surrounded by the flowers her gallants presented to her. There she sipped her tea or coffee to unceasing adulation, and finished the day at some noble house, where dining, dancing, and cards passed the reckless hours away. Or she went to *ridottos* or masquerades, or to Mrs. Cornely's Harmonic meetings, or to the Italian Opera House. And everywhere she watched for Lord Rashleigh, but he had apparently disappeared and been forgotten. Not even his old associates named him to her, and she was finally driven to ask Lady Pomfret "if she knew to what part of the world he had betaken himself and his temper?"

"You have driven him as far as Constantinople, I believe, miss; and, as Rashleigh never could keep his eyes off a pretty woman, I suppose a bow-string or a cimiter has made an end of him by this time. You have a dozen lovers present, why do you ask after him?"

"Because, Fanny, he is the one lover not present."

"He has forgotten you, I'll warrant; and, for that matter, I think George Abney has done likewise."

At this moment Augustus Hutton entered, and both ladies turned to him with no end of questions. "Had he done this and that? Had he seen Mme. Crefor about Lady Pomfret's fan? Had he ordered the flowers for Ranelagh? Where was he going in such splendid state?" etc., etc.

Augustus said he was going to drive with Lady Hen-

rietta Hobart ; and Lady Pomfret shook her head at him, and vowed he had the courage of a dozen men. "A beauty without a penny of fortune !" she exclaimed. "Some day you will be charmed to such a pitch that you will ask her to marry you, and then, Mr. Hutton, can you tell me what will happen ?"

"I hope I shall have the good fortune to be accepted by her."

"And pray what will Mr. Hutton, senior, say ? And there is Miss Abney ! What are you going to do about Miss Abney ?"

"When the time arrives for decision the way will open. I cannot go through a gate until I come to it, can I, Lady Pomfret ?"

"Oh, wise Augustus !" she answered ; and with that, Harry came in and asked Bernicia to go with him to Bloomsbury. "You have not seen Claire," he said, "for nearly a month, and I want you to bring her back here. I am tired of George Abney's sombre airs. Why do you not put the man out of his misery ?"

"Does he ask for me ?"

"He asked for you yesterday, and I told him you had the town at your feet."

"Pray what did he say ?"

"What does a man say when he bites his thumb and draws his brows together ? He also enquired where Lord Rashleigh was, and I answered—at the ends of the earth for aught anyone knows of him."

"And then what ?"

"He walked quickly away. Can you go with me to Bloomsbury ?"

"I shall be ready in an hour."

"So long?"

"I have to dress. If I am to put George out of his misery, I wish to do it handsomely. I should like him to feel a little disappointment."

Claire was really delighted to see Bernicia, and Bernicia pounced on Claire like a robin on a cherry. "You naughty Claire!" she cried. "You have been in the sulks for four weeks. That comes of being a saint. I, who am a sinner, would have found my temper in just four minutes. Fie for shame, Claire! to make us all miserable because we wanted to make Harry and you happy."

"Dear Bernicia, you wanted me to do something that was not honourable."

"Gracious! If I should go into retreat every time I was asked to do things not exactly honourable, I might as well get out of the world and be done with it. Fanny and Lord Pomfret want to see you, and do you happen to remember that in four more weeks you will have to decide between Augustus and Harry? The 21st of March, Claire! A great day! a most important day! the day before your wedding day!"

"My wedding day is by no means fixed."

"'Tis a pity, then. You will be in a nice pickle if it is not settled before the 21st of March. Harry will be neither to hold nor to bind. Uncle William will be urging and advising and perhaps scolding: there will be trouble, and no end of it."

Claire listened with an anxious face. "There will be also Augustus Hutton," she said. "What will he say? What will his father say? Oh, Bernicia! I do not know what to do!"

"As to Augustus, I shall manage Augustus completely. As to his father, he does nothing but talk about his son's familiarity with lords and ladies. I know a 'lady' who will make him very indifferent to your affairs. And as to what you must do, Fanny will tell you what to do. And grandmamma also. That reminds me—I shall go and talk to grandmamma, while you put on your frock and coat. Where is George?"

"At the office."

"How is he?"

"As disconsolate and gloomy as a man may be. Bernicia, you do certainly love him a little?"

"A little? Yes."

"And will love him more?"

"I know not. I know not anything of what I may do beyond the ten minutes I give you. Do not keep me waiting longer."

Madame was delighted to see her granddaughter. She smiled, she drew her face close to her own and kissed her. Harry had really set the door of her heart open, not only for himself, but for his sisters. She looked at Bernicia and was proud of her beauty and fine bearing. "You are like Harry," she said. She could think of no higher compliment. And Bernicia only wanted a little encouragement to love her. She kissed her gladly, and said, "How happy, how noble you look, grandmamma! You have grown ten years younger."

"It is Harry's doing. Tell me something of your life. Harry says you are famous; that you have many lovers; that you may even be a duchess if you will."

"But I will not."

"Is it George Abney yet?"

She shook her head.

"Lord Rashleigh, then?"

She shook her head again. "I shall tell you, when I know myself," she answered.

The old lady was vexed when Claire took her away. She was enjoying Bernicia's confidences and chatter; her anecdotes of Fanny and Lord Pomfret; her queer sarcastic comments on people and events. "You grow clever, child," she said, "and sensible too, I think. Come and see me again, very soon." She did not understand that it was herself who had grown loving; and that with the enlargement of her heart she had become more appreciative of the excellencies of others.

The question of Claire's marriage, broached by Bernicia, became now the question of the household in Piccadilly. It was discussed morning and afternoon and evening. It was discussed singly, and in council. Harry talked it over in every light with Claire, and with Fanny, and with Bernicia. Fanny talked it over with Lord Pomfret; and Bernicia talked it over with Tarsset. Then everyone had their say in company: but the end of all deliberations was the same—Claire must marry Harry on the morning of the 22d. It was the only way to prevent disputes, and put an end at once to delays and proposals, which at the last could only terminate in the same way.

At first Claire made a resolute stand for her guardian's permission; but she was finally persuaded that it would be the greatest kindness to prevent him having to make any decision in the matter:

"He thinks a great deal of his promise to your parents, Claire," said Lord Pomfret, and therefore you ought to relieve him from any sense of breaking it. It is your duty to do so."

"Blood is thicker than water," said Lady Pomfret. "Harry is his own nephew; Augustus Hutton is neither his kith nor kin. Uncle William is not without nature. If neither his help nor his approval is asked, he will be glad enough that Harry should win—whether living or dead be against it."

"There is another reason why Uncle William should not be told," added Bernicia. "Claire is a little coward, and Uncle William might send her to her room on her wedding morning. And she would never have the face to disobey him—the thing has been proved." And Lord Pomfret laughed, and everyone laughed, and the resolution for the 22d of March was unanimously carried.

But amid all the happy business of the next month Bernicia appeared to have the most to do. She was out so frequently with Augustus Hutton that their engagement was not only rumoured, but accepted by the majority as a fact; for both appeared to be so happy, so full of affairs, so indifferent to the rest of the world. Singularly enough, Lady Pomfret took no notice of this fresh interest in Bernicia's life. Usually, her curiosity would not have suffered it to pass; but at this time she permitted Bernicia to devote herself to Mr. Hutton, and to go unquestioned concerning her motives or intentions. Not even Claire made any remark on the subject; Bernicia had said she would "manage Augustus completely," and Claire did not doubt her ability to do so. Her methods and their

results were unknown, but everyone had a comfortable reliance on them.

As the 22d of March drew near, Lord Pomfret visited the clergyman of his parish church, and advised him of the marriage. The rank of the contracting parties and Lord Pomfret's prestige and generosity answered all questions. "The young people," he explained, "were desirous to have a quiet wedding, and get away to Sir Harry's castle with as little observation as possible ; and for his part he thought they were right." The clergyman thought so too, and was "certain that nothing likely to lead to publicity would attend the ceremony in the church." And Lord Pomfret was as proud of his diplomacy in the matter as if he had concluded a treaty between two great nations.

Two days before *the day* Harry spoke of his marriage to madame. She was always inclined to discuss the subject with a little temper, and that morning more so than usual.

"Can you not be content, Harry?" she asked. "Why do you wish to put an end to the days of your freedom? A married man is never his own man again. Of course Claire is to be your wife, but why hurry the matter? In a year hence, it will be time enough to talk of it."

"No, mother ; I am anxious to go to Cresswell. The place needs my presence."

"I thought your cousin Allan was doing very well for you."

"Allan is not the master. I must go north in two days."

"Two days ! Harry, Harry, you cannot mean it ! It will break my heart to part with you."

"But my darling mother, you will come to me when the summer comes. I would not tell you before, because I could not bear to give you pain. But now I must go, and I must take Claire with me."

"Do you mean that you are going to marry Claire in two days?"

"Yes."

She was silent for a few minutes. There was a great struggle going on in her strong loving heart, and she would not speak until she had got the mastery. Harry was sitting before her holding her hands, and watching for the first trace of her intention. It came with a sigh and a smile. She stooped forward and kissed him. "My boy," she said softly, "I wish that you may be happy. I wish it, with all my heart."

"I cannot be happy without your presence and blessing; mother, you will come to my marriage? I shall bring a carriage for you at half-past ten. You will not disappoint me? It would be but a sad marriage without you."

"Oh, Harry, how can I? What will your uncle say? And George? If you had told your uncle I should have heard of it from him. Are you going to marry Claire unknown to him? I fear you will get into great trouble."

"Not if you are present. Uncle will not question what you sanction. You see, mother, it is this way,"—and then Harry went over every point which made the marriage, as arranged, a kindness and a necessity. "Why should we begin a quarrel?" he asked. "So many things are said in anger that had better never been said, and uncle will be very glad to be relieved from the cruelty of forcing on Claire

a marriage she would rather die than submit to. When a condition is irrevocable, people make the best of it. Uncle William will do so also."

"I will tell you what he will do. If there is the slightest chance of breaking the marriage—for you know Claire is yet a minor—he will invoke the law to break it. If she is a ward of Chancery—which I think likely—you can be punished with transportation to slavery in the colonies, or even with death for abducting her. Take my advice, put off your marriage until Claire is her own mistress."

"Before that time Uncle William will have forced her into a marriage with Augustus Hutton, or she will have fretted herself into the grave. Mother, I love Claire, and you know how important her fortune will be to me."

"I know. But wait a little, Harry."

"I cannot wait. All arrangements are made. I shall be married on the 22d, at eleven o'clock in the morning. Are you going to desert me—you, to whom I owe everything? For while others talked and speculated about my pardon, you went to Mr. Whitefield and got the promise that obtained the pardon. Now help me to the wife that will make me happy and the fortune that will make me great. Dear mother, will you?"

"I cannot resist you, Harry. And if your marriage has to be, my presence is the only way to prevent your uncle making great trouble about it. Come for me yourself. I will be ready. Oh, Harry! Harry! you have made me to live again. I was like a dead woman when you came to me. What else can I do but bless you and pleasure you in all things?" and

she lifted her face wet with the tears of love, and Harry kissed them away.

The next morning he was at Bloomsbury mansion at the appointed time. He was full of fears lest some mischance should have detained William Bouverie or George Abney later at home than usual. But they had been gone for an hour and the house was in its customary still life. The porter looked with curious attention at Harry's splendid wedding suit, because he wished to describe it to his fellow-servants. He thought of course that Harry was going to court, but why was madame going with him? All day long this question excited the household.

For only two of the oldest servants had ever seen madame arrayed as she was this morning : the porter, who remembered her splendours when Nicholas Bouverie was Lord Mayor of London, and she had given great feasts in the Guildhall, and her own woman Barbara, who had attired and dressed her for them. That was many years ago. They had almost forgotten the time. Harry started with admiration, and his unavoidable exclamations were the sincerest flattery madame could have had. She rose with a smile to meet him, and said : " I do not intend to shame your splendour, Harry ! " and he answered : " You are simply beautiful, mother ! I might well be proud to take you into the king's presence. " For she had removed for the occasion her black garments and was dressed in a fawn-coloured satin, embroidered with silver, and trimmed with lace of priceless value and beauty, and round her neck were three long strands of magnificent pearls, the lowest falling even to the waist line. As she rose, Barbara advanced and covered her

head and form with a hood and cloak of blue velvet lined with ermine. And it was wonderful to see how proudly madame walked by Harry's side without one faltering step.

"She has found her years again," said Barbara to the porter. "There was never any right in her being so old. It was just sitting still and fretting for the days that had gone."

"Ay, it does make a difference whether one looks forward or backward," the old man answered, and Barbara and he watched the coach out of sight, and then went to the kitchen to talk over this wonderful event.

The church was open, but it was still empty when madame and Harry arrived there, and the noble old lady and the splendidly handsome youth made a startling picture in the dim, dusty, silent church. Madame sat down in one of the pews near the communion rail and Harry stood by her side. Both were keenly sensitive to that spiritual aura which clings to places in which humanity for generations has poured out its spiritual life in prayer, and sorrow and adoration. It was a short interval of lofty and intense feeling, and then the clergyman in his white surplice, and Claire in her bridal garments, attended by a little company of gaily dressed friends, entered at the same moment.

Claire leaned upon Lord Pomfret's arm, but when they reached the altar Lord Pomfret had taken Harry's place and Harry was standing by his bride. There was no delay, and in a short half hour the irrevocable words were spoken,—irrevocable, because no after words can ever unsay or undo their eternal consequences and their eternal memories. Then the party

adjourned to the vestry, and madame, in a clear bold hand, wrote her name first among the witnesses. An air of joyfulness pervaded the dingy little room : Claire was radiant as a bride could be ; Harry unspeakably happy ; madame proudly satisfied ; and the rest of the company breathing an atmosphere of sympathetic pleasure.

After the signing of the register, Lady and Lord Pomfret entreated madame to eat breakfast with the bridal party ; and when Harry took her hand and kissed her, she could no longer make an excuse. And it was a wonderful breakfast to her. She sat at Harry's left hand : she drank the first toast to his happiness ; she was the beloved and honoured guest of everyone present ; she saw her granddaughters as she had never before seen them ; and as for Lord Pomfret, he took especial pleasure in paying her respect and attention. She was not able to find anything in him but what was charming and good.

When the breakfast was over, Claire and Harry departed for their Border home, and the company dispersed. Then Lord Pomfret made it a point of honour to take madame in his own coach as far as Bloomsbury. He was so eager to please her, so careful of her comfort, so determined to make her safety his own care, that Bernicia could not but wonder, until Lady Pomfret laughingly explained " that it was her lord's clever way to compass his own pleasure."

" He wants to go to White's, my dear, and he will take our grandmother home, to get there without question or opposition. La, Bernicia, I know exactly what his little plan is ! He will play the angelical all the way to Bloomsbury, then he will dash off to

White's, send home the carriage, and settle down to a comfortable night with the cards. But he has been obliging beyond everything lately, and I trust I know enough to sometimes know nothing. Let us sit down and have a quiet day. We have lived in a whirlwind for a month or more."

Madame was a little afraid that she would find her son at home, but he was even later than usual. She had plenty of time to remove all her splendours, and resume the modest black silk and white lawn which was her usual attire, and to knit several rounds in her stocking, before she heard his step. But she knew the moment he entered the house that he brought anger and trouble with him. He came to her speedily; his face, his deportment, his speech, all expressing the uttermost wrath and indignation.

"Do you know, mother, what this means?" he asked, in a stern voice. "I have a letter from Claire, in which she says she has married my scamp of a nephew, Harry Cresswell."

"William, your nephew is the finest gentleman in England. I say it."

"He is a scoundrel of the first water! But I will send the officers of the law after him. Do you know that he has abducted an heiress, and made himself liable to be sold as a slave to the colonies? Yes, indeed! If I rouse the Chancellor in the matter, he will find it hard to escape the gallows. Why do you not speak, mother?"

For madame, after looking scornfully into her son's face, had dropped her eyes upon her knitting, as if it were her only interest. When William Bouverie again asked the question, she answered:

"When you talk like a reasonable man, and not like an angry boy, it will be time enough to answer you : as for the officers of the law, and the Chancellor, and the gallows, they are all nonsense."

"I am talking of the law of England, and Harry Cresswell will not find breaking it all nonsense !"

"What has Harry done wrong ?"

"He has carried off Claire Abney."

"It was very imprudent of Harry, for he ought to have married a girl in his own rank, a lady of birth and political influence. I have told him so often. What does George say ?"

"George does not yet know. He went to Greenwich early this morning on business. I did not get this letter until half-past three o'clock. But George is infatuated with Bernicia. I cannot depend upon George in this matter."

"Then you stand alone in your opposition to the marriage."

"What kind of a marriage ?" he asked, in a passion. "I will be bound, it was done in a corner, by some wretched Fleet parson."

"It was done in Lord Pomfret's parish church. Lord and Lady Pomfret, Bernicia, Sir Thomas and Lady Damer, Captain Bedford and Miss Bellenden, Admiral Graves and the Hon. Jack Capel, and the two Miss Sheridans, were among the witnesses to it."

"How do you know this ? Have you also had a letter ?"

"I was present at the ceremony ; and at the wedding breakfast after it."

"What ! I cannot believe it, mother ! You ! You ! How could you deceive and wrong me so shamefully ?"

"My dear son, what I have done, I have done to spare you, and all of us, a great deal of trouble and annoyance. Under existing circumstances you are responsible for nothing. You have made no decision, you have expressed no opinion, you have given no consent. Claire has taken the whole blame—if there be any blame—upon herself. As for abduction, that is sheer nonsense, if you please. For she gave herself willingly to Harry, in the presence of many reputable witnesses. She waited the full six months she promised to wait, and at the end of them found herself more resolved than ever not to marry Augustus Hutton. I doubt myself whether Augustus wished to marry her."

"Have you heard anything about him?"

"I neither saw him, nor yet heard his name mentioned. William, there is nothing for you to do but accept what you cannot put aside. Had Claire waited for your consent, she might have waited a year, five years; she might have died in the waiting, and you would not have given it. And all the time there would have been disputing, and fretting, and worrying without end. I say it was a wise thing, and a kind thing, to prevent this prolonged suffering—wise and kind for you, and for everyone."

"Mother, I have been a good son to you. I have never at any time grieved you, and yet, ever since you saw this rebel grandson, you have put him before me."

"Had you been in trouble, in danger, in poverty, as Harry was, I should have stood just as truly by you, son William. But what do you need of me? Love asks service and self-sacrifice to keep it alive. I can do nothing for you."

"You can do a great thing for me. Let me now tell you that I have loved for six years the sweet Marion Wilton, the widow of our late minister. And for your sake, because I would put no woman here before you, I have not asked her to marry me."

"Then you have done Marion Wilton a great wrong, and you must repair it at once. You need not fear to bring her here, for my heart has renewed itself, and I am eager to love and to be loved. In the future I shall live much among my grandchildren, and learn how good each one is in his and her own way. I like Madame Wilton. Your choice of a wife is admirable. Bring her home, and the sooner the better."

"Thank you, mother!" He was touched and softened by a consent so warm and so unexpected, and he said, in a much more natural voice: "I cannot help feeling very anxious about Claire. It is a long, hard journey to Northumberland in the spring, when the roads are so bad; and if what Allan Cresswell said be but half true, Cresswell Castle is far from being a comfortable habitation."

"Harry sent a servant before them to secure at short distances lodging and fresh horses. As for Cresswell Castle, the central portion has been in the hands of builders and furnishers for four months. Woodwork and upholstery of the most splendid kind have been sent from London, and Allan Cresswell's last advices said: 'The central rooms of the castle are now fit for a queen to dwell in.'"

"Where did Harry get the money for such extravagance? He must have mortgaged the place."

"He did. I hold the mortgage."

William Bouverie bit his lip suddenly, but said

nothing in reply, and madame rose, with some remark about the dinner being more than ready. Neither, however, had any appetite for dinner, and what conversation there was referred entirely to Mr. Hutton, senior.

"I must see him at once," said William Bouverie, "and I am ashamed of my errand. How he will take the matter remains to be seen. He may insist on Claire's minority and legal inability to decide her own lot, and thus make all the trouble you have taken so much unnecessary care to prevent me making."

It was therefore with some trepidation he knocked at Mr. Hutton's door. If he had heard of the marriage, he expected to find him with his son, and in a very bad temper. He was agreeably disappointed. Mr. Hutton was alone and in the highest possible spirits.

"Come in, friend Bouverie!" he cried. "I was just thinking about you, just wanting to see you. What lucky circumstance brought you here to-night?"

"A very unlucky one, I fear. Claire Abney has married herself to my nephew this morning. It looks bad, Hutton, for me. It looks as if I wanted Claire's money for my nephew. Nothing could be less true. I have done all in my power to forward your son's interest and suit. Take my word for that."

As William Bouverie made this exculpation of himself, the father of Augustus was tapping smilingly a letter which lay under his hand. "Bouverie," he said, "we are both a little behind our children. When and where was Claire married?"

"She was married at Lord Pomfret's parish church

at eleven o'clock this morning, to Sir Harry Cresswell."

"And my son Augustus was married at St. Margaret's Church at eleven o'clock this morning, to Lady Henrietta Hobart, an earl's daughter, one of the oldest families in England; lots of influence! Bless my soul, Bouverie, I cannot take it in! My son to marry a 'Lady'—an earl's daughter! It is past all whooping over!" And Hutton laughed aloud in his joy, and was even a little testy because his friend was not equally delighted. Indeed, Mr. Hutton was so excited over his son's grand marriage that he would hardly notice the fact that Claire had a great deal of money and property and Lady Henrietta not a penny.

"She has blood," he said, "and blood is better than money. Augustus has plenty of money in his own right, and he can count on mine to help his out. And the beginning and the end of it is, the young people were in love; and, after all, Bouverie, it is love that makes the world go round."

There was really nothing to be obtained from the elder Mr. Hutton but self-congratulations. He was so much excited over his son's marriage that he took no interest in Claire's, and the old promise, which had been such a vital thing to William Bouverie, had become to him a very shadowy affair.

"People could not look twenty years ahead; it was nonsense," he said. "And as to giving marriage orders for babies in their cradles, it was a thing beyond reason. For his part, he was glad the children of the bond had broken it, and done so well in the breaking. It might have been broken to no purpose but poverty and shame. He thought they might have a bottle of

wine together, and drink the health of the two fair brides and the two clever young fellows who had won them."

And while they were doing so, Bernicia sat thoughtfully over her bedroom fire talking to Tarsset. Lady Pomfret had gone early to bed, to pay up more arrears of sleep, and the house was very silent. "I wonder, Tarsset," said Bernicia, "if this wedding will last through their wedded life?"

"I think it will," answered Tarsset. "Lady Claire is good, fair, wise, and rich—that is, a woman four stories high; and Sir Harry's love for her is very great, and will better what is best in her. I wish that you were wed with as much good promise."

"Tarsset, have you not yourself often told me to look well to the other horse before I ran in harness. Not every couple makes a pair."

"To be sure, miss. But, then, if you always say 'no,' you will never be married."

"Wedlock is padlock. I will not put my finger into too tight a ring."

"Now, Lord Rashleigh——"

"Oh, no!"

"Mr. George Abney, then?"

"Oh, no!"

"Tush, miss! They love most who deny their love. With either of these men you would be happily united."

"Yes, I know. I have often heard that in marriage two are made one. The question is, *which one?* Would Lord Rashleigh become me, or should I have to lose my identity in his? About George Abney, there is no doubt of *which one.*"

"If you would feel more and reason less, miss, you might come to be a wife, else——"

"I am sleepy. I will dream that I am in love. If I knew where Lord Rashleigh was I would send my dream to seek him. There could be no danger in a dream marriage."

"Take your time, miss. Perhaps marriage is not in your destiny at all, and 'tis well known that marriage and hanging go by destiny."

Then the wilful girl turned in a flash of temper and said: "If it is not there I shall make it there. You may be sure of that!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE WORD LISTENED FOR.

MADAME sat long that night talking of the past to her woman; for she was too excited by the unusual events of the day to sleep, and she was also waiting for her son's return from his visit to Mr. Hutton. She knew the latter to be a vain man, having a strong consciousness of his own wealth and importance, and she feared he would resent to the utmost of his power the implied slight to his son. But William Bouverie passed the night with his friend. They easily slipped from their conversation about Claire's marriage to an examination of Claire's financial affairs, and a discussion as to the best possible manner in which to settle her estate on herself, and prevent Sir Harry Cresswell dissipating it, for as yet William Bouverie had formed no good opinion of Harry; he believed him to be entirely reckless and improvident.

So George did not hear of his sister's marriage until the following morning. It caused him no surprise. He had seen and understood the conditions between Harry and Claire from the beginning of their acquaintance. Nor did he seriously disapprove of the alliance. He believed that the love between Harry and Claire was sufficient to reconcile all differences of faith and education. But he was much pained by the fact that he had not been trusted with their intentions, and not

asked to take a share in the nuptial ceremony. He was willing to admit that their desire to save Claire's guardian all overt action in the matter was wise and reasonable, but he wished Bernicia had influenced him to take a part in their plans. She had not done so. She had feared it would give him too many opportunities, and place him on too familiar a footing. And he set down the omission on the same list as Lady Pomfret's supposed threefold denial to his visits.

The subject admitted of endless discussion, but neither madame nor William Bouverie looked at it in the same way as George did. Madame would not see that George had been badly treated. "You would have embarrassed Claire," she said. "She always was a little afraid of you; and your jealousy would have kept Bernicia in a temper all the time. Bernicia was sure it would be better that you had nothing to do in the matter, and I think so too." William Bouverie was of the same opinion. He thought there would be plenty of annoying suspicions and talk in the Silver Street Meeting. Many would say they had managed to keep Claire's money in the family, and it was a good thing for Claire's brother to be able to positively deny their knowledge of Claire's intentions.

One April day, when spring was at its loveliest, Lord Pomfret was summoned to Windsor on business likely to keep him for a week, and Bernicia said to her sister: "Suppose I go for grandmother? Let us give her one happy day, make a great deal of her, show her as much of the world as she would like to see."

"It is a good thought, Bernicia," answered Lady Pomfret. "After all, in spite of our friends and

lovers, what two lonely women we are! There is no one in London of our kindred but grandmother and Uncle William, and we see next to nothing of them."

"There is Lord Pomfret."

"La, child! He is only a connection by marriage. But grandmother and uncle are of our blood, and if it came to will-making, we should feel it. Say we had not seen them for a year of Sundays, yet I'll wager anything we should leave all we had to them, rather than to any of the dear friends and lovers that we dine with, and dance with, and make love to, every day of our lives."

So Bernicia went for madame, and the old lady was pleased to spend a whole day with her granddaughters. Fanny had surprised her on the wedding day; she could hardly believe that the gracious, cheerful, kindly woman was the proud, intolerant girl she had tried to influence on her first entrance into London life. Nor was she. In the intervening years, Fanny had rubbed smooth the angles of her character, and lost the offensive self-sufficiency which accompanies youth, and an especially happy and prosperous youth. She had learned to control her own wishes, and be thoughtful of the wishes of others; and in fact, had become a much more loving and lovable woman.

So madame went for one day, and she stayed four; further, she thoroughly enjoyed every hour of her visit. Her granddaughters took her to drive, and showed her all the notables on the Mall and in the park; interspersing their information with witty and interesting anecdotes—bits of charming gossip and not too ill-natured "hear-says," traditions, love affairs, naughty gambling stories with good morals, and news

of the court and royal family, told softly with slight pretences to secrecy. And what woman, old or young, very pious or very worldly, ever lived who was averse to such conversation? It may be listened to with advisory deprecations, or with genuine enjoyment, but it is listened to, and madame, apart from this natural love of hearing and seeing, was thoroughly under the charm of her two beautiful and affectionate companions.

And though Lady Pomfret had no special entertainments during these four days, many interesting people called, and sipped tea, and talked of the masques and dinners they had been to, and told the news of the town. On the last day they went together to call upon Lady Augustus Hutton, and found her mixing a lemonade for her father-in-law, who was in a seventh heaven of proud delight at finding himself actually among the British nobility. And when they returned home they had a delightful little dinner in Fanny's own parlour, and Bernicia imitated the old gentleman's conceited antics, and discussed his remarks, madame and Lady Fanny adding pepper and salt to the conversation. They sat at a small round table and helped each other to the hot rook pie, and roasted birds, and delicious sweets; and in their pleasant privacy laughed and chatted about their acquaintances, and speculated and prophesied about Harry and Claire, and altogether had such real delight in their trustful confidences as they had never found in any public effort to be happy.

Finally, William Bouverie's probable marriage was spoken of, and Lady Pomfret said she was glad to hear the news. Madame, she said, would then be

far more with her grandchildren, and as she was the eldest, she would have the first claim upon her company. Upon which Bernicia vowed she would choose a husband and marry forthwith, in order to get her share; "and is it not a mercy, Fanny," she asked, "that Harry lives so far off? for if he were in London grandmother would never give us a single day."

Madame enjoyed all this charming appreciation. She was wise enough to deduct from it the excess springing from the time, the circumstances, and from the spirit of its givers. Had she been still wiser, she would have taken it with all its sparkling foam and effervescence. She had four happy days, and on the morning of the fifth Bernicia took her back to Bloomsbury. She was really tired, and she went at once to her room, but she kissed the girl with an unusual emotion, and said again with an involuntary sigh, "You are like Harry, my dear."

As it happened, George was in the house; in fact, he had purposely remained at home in order that he might go to Lady Pomfret's and enquire for madame's health, her prolonged stay having aroused some uneasiness. He was dressed for the visit, and awaiting only the proper hour when a formal call could be made. When he saw the Pomfret coach at the door, and understood from the attitude of both madame and Bernicia that all was well, he suddenly resolved to have that very morning from Bernicia an answer to his suit. He did not stop to argue the wisdom of this resolve with himself; he had come to that point where, sink or swim, wise or foolish, he would know the truth, and the whole truth.

Very rarely indeed are such impulses wise ones.

The power behind urging them may generally be distrusted; but George cared not, and reasoned not. "I will make her speak; she shall trifle with my life and love no longer," he said almost angrily. And then he went down into the great entrance hall, and paced its length to and fro, watching for her approach. She came sooner than he expected. He saw her pass the parlour door, a smile on her face. It brightened for a moment when she saw him, and then swiftly disappeared; but he took her by the hand, and led her to the state parlour. She made no opposition, for she was so busily thinking what she must do that she forgot altogether what George was doing, until she found herself within the room. Her eyes fell first on a large new painting that occupied a wide space on the wall opposite the entrance; and she was glad of the diversion it might cause.

"Oh, cousin," she cried, "you have brought me to see the new picture! All gods and goddesses, are they not? Very ugly, too! Can you imagine live women with such cheeks and arms? And please to look at their ankles. I thank my stars that I am not a goddess!" and she put out her daintily shod feet and admired them, and stood on tiptoe on them, and made George burn with the joy of her beauty. He spoke to her with a singular tenderness in his voice, saying:

"Sweet Bernicia, I have watched and longed for this opportunity, and now that I have found it I vow you shall hear and answer me. Do you remember what hopes you gave me that morning at Richmond?"

"Do you remember what passed after we parted that morning in Richmond?"

"Do you blame me for Lord Rashleigh's temper?"

"No, indeed, you have your own temper! You have no necessity to get behind anyone else's."

"That morning you promised to give me an answer when you returned to London. Weeks, months have passed; and you still keep me in misery. Sit down, and let me talk to you."

"There is no help for it; since you vow, I *shall*."

"You spoke frankly then; you said you disliked the thought of marrying a man who was in trade, and who was a Dissenter. You feared your friends would cease to know you, and you confessed you were made happy or unhappy by what people said to you and of you."

"Indeed, I have not changed my ideas at all. I feel now as I did then, even more so."

"Then let me tell you that I have found a way to avoid this trouble; to put it out of existence. There is across the Atlantic a great and beautiful city, where trade is honourable, and where no form of religion either adds to or takes from a man's social standing. The king has his representative there; a little court of lords and ladies and officers surround him; there is no lack of all the elegances and refinements of life, and the climate is heavenly. I will go there and found a great business. I will build you the most splendid house in America. I will give you everything you desire. I will love you with all my soul, and watch over your happiness continually until the end of my life. Will you go with me? If you love me, you will go."

"Am I to leave my brother and sister and grandmother? Am I to cross the great ocean, and go to a

strange country, and live among strange people and strange customs?"

"If you love me, I shall be sufficient."

"Do you wish me to worship in your meeting-house, or may I go, as I now do, to the Church of England?"

"My God will be your God, and my Church your Church. I have many serious objections to Episcopacy."

"Yes, I understand. Now, George, suppose you build or buy a fine house in London. Are you as rich as Augustus Hutton?"

"I trust I should have a good balance in my favour, if I put down guinea for guinea with Augustus."

"Then why not give up business altogether as Augustus has done. Why not become a man of fashion and a Churchman? We could travel and see world, and as your sister has married a nobleman, if we entertained generously when we returned, people would forget that you had been a trader in hemp and flax and such things, and had gone to the Silver Street Meetinghouse."

"My dearest, you propose impossibilities. I cannot give up such a business as I now have; it would be wicked. I have none of the tastes necessary to a man of fashion. Augustus is fit for little else. And as for becoming a Churchman, it is beyond my nature. Dissent is in my very blood, it beats with my heart. I could not become a Churchman. It would be the rankest hypocrisy."

"Sir!" she answered, with a scorn that no words could interpret. "Sir! you are self-convicted. If you will not resign either your business or your

Church for my sake, why should I give up my country, my friends, and my Church for your sake? Your selfishness is without parallel and without excuse. Love *me*, indeed! You love only yourself, your business, your prejudices. I wish you to understand, I will be no appendage to them. You shall not crumble my life, and my faith, and my tastes, and my happiness as sauce to your own. You are a curiosity of selfishness. And you call yourself a lover! Upon my word, you ought to be put into a book! Do not touch me. No, sir, I will not be detained! I have seen to the bottom of your heart, and 'tis a very sordid and selfish one. Thank Heaven! I have not given a good honest one in exchange for it. I bless myself that I can still say my heart is my own."

"Bernicia! Bernicia! You misunderstand me."

"Not at all, sir. However you may cloak your demands, they are plain enough to me. You might as well say, 'I expect you to give up everything for me, and I will give up nothing for you.' Yet my position in the world is all to me that your business is to you. It would be just as wicked in me to give it up. If you have none of the tastes of people of fashion, I have none of the tastes of Dissenters and traders. As for Episcopacy, it is in my blood and beats with my heart. I could not become a Dissenter. It would be the rankest hypocrisy."

She was splendid in her scorn and anger, and he was cowed, like a child that is struck, by the justice of her reproof. But it was only for a moment. Ere she could reach the door he had laid his hand upon her, and in tones of passionate sorrow was entreating her attention, her patience, her forgiveness. She listened

with no sympathy, for she was deeply offended by his proposal. But George believed that she loved him. He knew so little of women that he thought her moments of tenderness were indications of a permanent condition, rather than of a transient mood. She had so often been angry, only to smile the sweeter afterward, that he refused to consider her present passion as real. And he had come to a fixed determination to put an end to such a tantalising relationship. She must then and there acknowledge her love, and pledge him her troth, or he must suffer her to pass out of his life forever.

In eager, eloquent words he told her these things, emphasising them with the most endearing epithets, and the strongest determination that she should listen and answer. He took her hands and held them firmly; he compelled her to look at him; to see and to feel the overmastering love which radiated from his whole being and fired his tongue. And in some measure she was moved. His beauty, his grace, his authority of manner, his passion of entreaty, would have caused her to make some concession, some show of liking, but for the words he had so unadvisedly spoken. She felt keenly their selfishness, their injustice, the domestic tyranny they might include; and with a comparative resentment, his impatience also affected her unfavourably. But this impatience rose from George's fixed idea, and he could not escape from his own determination. She must accept him as her husband, now, or release him forever; and he ended his pleading with this strong but blunt avowal:

"It is therefore, dearest, a question you must

answer without put-off, and without equivocation. You must say 'yes' or 'no.' Believe, Bernicia, though I love you to distraction, it is really *now*—or—*never* ! ”

“Then, sir,” she answered, with deliberation, with her eyes fixed on his eyes, with her whole attitude expressive of conscious decision, “then, sir, it is never! It is never, never, never!”

She passed out of the room as she said the last word, and he followed her, dazed, silent, with a slow, dragging step like a man physically wounded. The heavy front door was beyond the strength of her small hands; he went forward and opened it, and then followed her to her coach. She took no notice of his attention, but as she was driven away, his tall, straight figure and his white, pained face as he stood before her bare-headed, gave her a sting of remorseful pain. “But it is all his own fault.” She said the words aloud to her inner self, as if she would the more forcibly assure that not easily deceived personality.

It was raining when she left Bloomsbury; it was raining hard when she reached home. “The elements are in a temper to suit my own,” she muttered. “What a dreary thing is life! And never a trouble but a man in it somewhere. But for George Abney I should have missed the rain; now, as like as not, I shall utterly spoil my new petticoat on the wet steps.”

Lady Pomfret was reading a novel when she returned. She laid it down when Bernicia entered. “I am glad to see you, child,” she said. “Why, then, what is the matter?”

“George Abney has been impatient and impertinent, and I have told him this morning I would never,

never marry him. I ought to have said so a long time ago."

"So much for that affair! I am glad it is done with. But as you have now managed to get off with both your old loves, it is to be hoped you will be speedily on with one of your new ones. Whom do you like best?"

"I am not so unjust as to be partial. They are all alike to me."

"I must tell you that Harry has sent us a letter. It is quite honeymoonish, I assure you."

"Grandmother has talked so much of Harry! Let us dismiss him for a little. I am tired of Harry."

"George——"

"Is not to be spoken of at all. He wanted me to go to Amercia, to give up all my friends, my Church, my tastes, my opinions, and to consider him as a full equivalent."

"The wretch! I hope you gave him some sharp words."

"I am not in debt to myself, Fanny. A store of disagreeable things came into my head, and they naturally slipped off my tongue. George has evidently been watching me; he had the names and number of my lovers at his finger ends, and his 'now or never' this morning was all jealousy, proud jealousy, and burning envy. Let us talk no more of him. He says indeed he will talk no more to me."

"La, my dear! I have known better men than George Abney to lie."

Bernicia, however, was little inclined to follow her own expressed desire. She could not avoid speaking of George. She slipped into the subject very fre-

quently with her sister. She talked continually of it when she was alone with Tarsset.

Tarsset said the conclusion was what she looked for. "You never loved the man, miss, for when we love truly, we not only say it, we show it. You never showed it."

"I shall never be in love, Tarsset. Men are such disappointments."

"Your love hour will strike, miss. There is someone somewhere that you won't be able to love too much. Look at your face. To be born a beauty is to be born bespoke."

Still Bernicia could not throw off the unhappy feeling of her last interview with her lover. The April days were full of memories of him, and with all George's faults, he had charmed her as none of her present lovers could. She was so dissatisfied and depressed that Lady Pomfret said pettishly one afternoon, when Bernicia refused to go shopping with her:

"I trust, in Heaven's mercy, we are not to have over again your love temper for Lord Rashleigh! You fretted and worried after him for two long months."

"I never did, Fanny! Never!"

"Oh, indeed, miss, you could not deceive me. I knew the meaning of your sighs and sadness, of your sudden hatred of lovers and dances, of your dinners set aside, and your dress uncared for. It took you two months to say 'farewell forever' to Lord Rashleigh. For pity's sake, make your good-by to George Abney less disagreeable."

"It is a shame, Fanny."

"It is the truth, Bernicia." And Fanny went out

alone to do her shopping in something of a temper, while Bernicia went upstairs in another temper, to worry Tarsset a little. So the early spring passed, and not very happily. One little source of discontent in a house, even though it be unspoken, affects the domestic atmosphere; and though Bernicia pretended an unusual gaiety of spirit, she was really discontented and unhappy.

"I have been a whole year in the gay world, Tarsset," she said one day, as the woman was brushing her hair, "and what has it given me? I am no wiser. I am not more happy. Fanny says I have thrown all my good chances away. And I am not good. I want to be good, and the more I try, the more I fail. I wish I could go back to Cresswell."

"We never get our wish with wishing for it, miss. You may wish for a husband, and never get wed. 'Tis better to *will*, for if you have the will, you are certain to find the way."

"When I was last at Lady Huntington's, Mr. Whitefield spoke to me after the sermon. He said he was going to Scotland this summer, and would call upon Harry, either as he went or returned. Think of that! Mr. Whitefield in Cresswell Castle! Harry will make the whole world of him. I should like to be at Cresswell then. I daresay you would like it too, Tarsset."

"It would be nothing to me, Miss Bernicia. I do not approve of Mr. Whitefield. I never did approve of him. I never shall."

"I am not very happy, Tarsset."

"No one ever is very happy, miss."

The assertion covered the ground of Bernicia's discontentment. She was not quite happy, and she was

afraid to honestly ask herself the reason why. So the old life went ceaselessly on—riding in the park, dancing in the ballroom, a little music, a little play, a little pretending to be in love.

One afternoon in May Lady Pomfret received a call from Lady Orford, who had just returned from a long sojourn in various parts of the Continent. She was introduced to Bernicia, but took little notice of her, and Bernicia returned to her frame, and continued working on the rose she was embroidering. Presently Lady Orford spoke of a duel that had been fought that morning. "I was amazed when I heard of it," she said, "for Mr. Hope is timidity itself. I suppose he was too great a coward not to fight."

The sentiment pleased Bernicia, and she said so, and thereon followed a lively discussion as to what constituted real courage. Lady Pomfret said she knew a gentleman who positively refused to fight when challenged, because it was against his principles, and she was sure he was a brave man. Bernicia laughed a little and said, "that depended." Lady Orford continued:

"I know a truly brave man. I will put him against all the heroes of the sword and the pistol you can name. What do you think? He was travelling in France when I was there, and about sixty miles from Paris, in a lonely mountain hamlet, his servant was seized with malignant fever. The man required a constant attention, and the master sent to Paris for the Sisters of Charity, but until they arrived what was to be done? It was the black typhus, and no one, for either love or money, would take charge of the raving sufferer. So the master went to his servant's

side, he bathed his burning flesh, he moistened continually his swollen tongue, he performed for him all that his dreadful necessities required. And when death ended the ordeal, he alone of all the village dared to go with the body to the grave. I say, reverently, the man was a hero; he, if you please, was a brave man, if there ever was one."

Bernicia had dropped her needle; she was aflame with admiration. "I wish that I knew his name," she cried. "It ought to be written in gold."

"I hope it was an Englishman," said Lady Pomfret. "But English or not, the man had the courage of a noble soul."

"He thought little of his deed, and did not like it spoken of. He said his servant would have done the same kindness to him. If so, we are a nation of heroes."

"He *was* English, then!"

"I think that he is well known to you. It was Lord Francis Rashleigh."

Bernicia uttered an exclamation and sank into her chair; glad that her sister's effusiveness hid her own uncontrollable emotion. She stooped over her frame and pretended to have dropped her worsteds, and under this cover managed to leave the room without betraying her feelings. But she was profoundly moved and greatly astonished. Nothing in all her knowledge of Lord Rashleigh could have led her to imagine him in the character which Lady Orford had drawn so vividly, nothing, unless it was his evident admiration for Mr. Whitefield and his frequent attendance at Lady Huntington's Sunday night service.

She considered this fact, and came to the conclu-

sion that Mr. Whitefield's pictures of Christ among the sick and suffering had been the inspiring motive and the supernatural strength which had helped him to fulfil the dreadful and dangerous duty.

And then she was strangely solemn and sad. She also had listened to those eloquent Christ sermons, and what had they done for her? She looked timorously at Tarsset, and wondered if she could, for Christ's sake, have fulfilled the same duty toward her servant.

And after a day or two she told Tarsset the incident, and the woman wept a little, but did not praise Lord Rashleigh, a thing Bernicia had certainly expected her to do.

"It would be the Lord's mercy to the dying man," she said gently; "'tis few he leaves to die without some human kindness, and if they have to go alone, he comforts them himself. He says so, miss."

"I have been asking my heart, Tarsset, if I could have done what Lord Rashleigh did. If I am honest, I must say I could not."

"But you need not be out of heart about the duty that has not yet come to you, miss. If it were here to do, I'll warrant you would have the grace and the strength of the hour given you, and if it were to save life, or to ease death, you would push all lengths about it. I would trust myself to you, no matter how far gone I was."

This confidence pleased Bernicia, and the event was very pleasantly present in her mind. Wherever she went, she spoke of it, and was often rather shocked to hear the comments it provoked. A few said "Lord Rashleigh was the right kind of hero"; more thought it recklessness; some blamed him for "running the

risk of carrying the dreadful fever among distinguished people"—"It was a singular step, and he had no right to take it"—"It was quite uncalled for"—"What could he have been thinking of?"—"Very imprudent," and so on. Not many praised the nobleman as Lady Orford had done, and many disapproved altogether of a social departure so destructive of the most necessary social barriers.

So Bernicia was constantly employed in defending Lord Rashleigh, and she did not find the business disagreeable. But she was led by it to wonder where her old lover was, and when Lady Orford had seen him, and whether he had any intentions of coming back to England. She propounded these questions first to her sister Fanny, but Fanny said "she had not asked any such information," and she affected no concern about the subject. "It was a brave little story," she said, "and that was all there was about it." For she perceived Bernicia's renewed interest, and was not disposed to satisfy her curiosity. "It will help her to understand herself," she remarked to Lord Pomfret, "and I am not sorry if she has a heartache for a day or two on the matter. And I advise you to pooh, pooh! the whole thing, or we shall have another attack of the Rashleigh fever."

"Then she might marry him, if he had the luck to ask her at the right hour."

"It is no longer desirable, John. When a man becomes a saint, and goes gypsying all over the world, he is not likely to make a good husband. If Rashleigh would return home, and take a place in the treasury, or his seat in the House, or even travel on His Majesty's business, such a marriage might be

feasible. But Bernicia is now very complacent to that handsome young Campbell. He is heir to an earldom, and I confess that I think better of this lover than of all others."

"He is Scotch."

"'Tis true. But all men cannot be English, John. You would not wish it. The world would be too small for them. Here comes Campbell and Bernicia! See how beautifully they ride! I am sure there has not been in the park this morning, nor this year, nor the last ten years, so handsome a couple."

Bernicia came in glowing with her gallop, and full of the joy of youth and springtime, and Lord Pomfret made her many pretty compliments, which she merrily returned. Then Lady Pomfret urged her to dress for the carriage and go with her to make some visits.

"If you will call on Lady Orford I shall go with you," she answered; "for I am dying to know what has become of Lord Rashleigh. He is as much lost as a stone dropped in the sea."

"He has gone to the American colonies," said Lord Pomfret.

"Which report I do not believe, sir!" answered Bernicia.

"To shoot elk, I hear," he continued. "He will marry a brown princess, and buy a principality, and forget all about Rashleigh Court and England. Rashleigh is a queer fellow. You never know where you have Rashleigh. He is bad, he is good; he is here, he is there; he is one day this, and the next day that; he is anything and everything; that is Rashleigh—a good enough fellow for men, a dangerous fellow indeed for women."

"He is not half so bad, half so dangerous as you are, brother," and with this laughing impeachment, and a promise to her sister of a speedy return, she vanished.

Then the visit to Lady Orford was made, but nothing was gained by it. Plainly questioned, Lady Orford said she knew nothing of Lord Rashleigh's intentions. She believed he had been visiting a German noble, and hunting in the Black Forest; but the incident she had related happened not so far from Paris; and he might have been on his way to some seaport for India or America, or even home again by the longest way round, which was very likely to be Francis Rashleigh's way.

Bernicia took this information with apparent gaiety, not even her clever sister suspecting her disappointment. She chatted of Colonel Campbell, of the riding in the park, of the fashions for the coming season, of all the little incidents growing out of half a dozen calls, with an apparently light heart, and with an unflagging interest.

So they spent the afternoon, and when they returned home they found Madame Bouverie lying fast asleep on a sofa in Fanny's parlour. For a moment they stood at the door, looking at the placid face, but the picture was swiftly gone, for madame awoke with a smile almost as they entered, and Fanny and Bernicia kissed her eyes wide open, and helped her to rise and to smooth out the least little crease or crinkle in her dress and headdress.

"Do you wonder what has brought me so far, my dears? Let me tell you, it is something very extraordinary!" she exclaimed.

"Is uncle going to be married?" said Fanny.

Madame shook her head.

"Is George going to be married?" asked Bernicia.

Madame shook her head still more positively.

"Guess once more."

"It must then be Claire. Is all well with Claire and Harry?"

"I am going to see Harry!"

She said the words separately, and there was a ring of music in them. "I am going to see Harry. Your Uncle William is going, and Mr. Hutton," and then she turned to Bernicia and asked: "Will you go with me, Bernicia? I wish that you would."

"Indeed, grandmother, it will be a great pleasure to me; and Tarsset will fly out of her skin with delight. When shall we go? In a week or two?"

"In three days. Can you be ready?"

"There is no doubt of it."

"But I do not understand," said Lady Pomfret.

"Why are you going, grandmother? Why is Mr. Hutton going? And Uncle William? Is there any trouble?"

"There is no trouble. Last night my son said to me: 'Mother, Mr. Hutton and I are going to Cresswell. Claire's business can no longer be delayed. There ought to have been settlements and contracts before her marriage, and the neglect of these things has placed her money in the power of her husband. We are going now to make the best terms we can for Claire; but Harry has affairs very much in his own power.' I answered, 'Then they are well settled, for Harry Cresswell will do only the thing that is right, and I wish most sincerely that I was going with you.'

I did not think when the words came from my heart that such a thing was possible, but your uncle has persuaded me that my wish is not only possible but the very best and pleasantest thing that I can do for everyone."

"But how, grandmother? It was a hard journey, even for Bernicia," said Lady Pomfret.

"I had such wretched company," answered Bernicia. "And it was in the early spring, when the roads were strangled in mud or snow. Now 'tis June and all England is beautiful. How are we to go, grandmother?"

"You and I and our women will fill my son's best coach. The driver and another man will be outside, and Mr. Hutton and your uncle will ride on each side of the coach. All the men will be well armed, and a servant goes before us, to order rooms and meals and look after post horses. We shall take all the time we need to see what we wish to see. We shall rest when I am weary and we shall not travel on the Lord's Day. Your uncle is very happy with the thought of giving me such a grand holiday. Children, I have never been twenty miles outside of London."

There were tears in her eyes, that were not bred of sorrow. Her cheeks were flushed with anticipation. She talked excitedly of Harry, of the towns she would pass through, of the strange places she would see, and no young girl could have been more hopeful and enthusiastic.

Three days seemed but a little time, but when the heart goes with the hands, a great deal can be done in three days. It was then Monday afternoon, and

Bernicia was to be at Bloomsbury, fully prepared for the journey, on Thursday evening; and the party would leave there early on Friday morning. Fanny could hardly realise the change. Bernicia had become so dear to her, so much a part of her life, her plans, her hopes, that her sudden withdrawal was a shock. Everything now seemed empty to Fanny; she could not imagine how to pass the time without her.

"Why not go to Yorkshire?" asked Bernicia. "Lord Pomfret has a handsome place there; surely you ought to visit it sometimes."

"My dear, it is a thousand miles from everywhere. It is unendurably lonely. I had enough of the country in Richmond last summer. Fresh air gives me the vapours. I shall stay in London and worry John, and grumble at everything until you return. When will that be?"

"When grandmother returns. She will make Harry bring her back before the winter, for she is resolved he shall have a house in London and pass the winters near her."

"I am glad of it. Then, if you do not cross your destiny you may marry Leslie Campbell, and live in Campbell House, and I shall be happily employed in looking after both of you."

"Grandmother has the same intentions. So then Harry and I ought to be well cared for."

"But oh, Bernicia, my dear little sister, I have a heartache to part with you."

"'Tis but for a few weeks. They will pass like a dream."

"And when you return, you will have so much to

tell me. I like to hear about newly married people, and Harry and Claire's tiffs and tribulations will be particularly interesting."

"Do you believe they will have any tiffs and tribulations?"

"Do you think two lives are made one without a good deal of pressure of some kind or other? Lord John had to bear a good many tiffs before he got into his proper place. And never doubt me, the little saint, Claire, has a will that matches Harry's very completely. I think, indeed, that I would rather stake on Claire than on Harry. But I shall be glad to know how the battle goes and I hope Harry will win it, for I think a woman that does not obey her lord a most disagreeable creature," and Fanny laughed and looked at Bernicia, and when Bernicia would have spoken she added: "I am not in the question at all. I am the exception, my dear, and nobody knows it."

For once the anticipation of a pleasure did not exceed the reality. All that madame and Bernicia had hoped from their leisurely, comfortable trip, they enjoyed to the full. The weather was charming, the roads in good condition; and the whole party in excellent health and spirits. Mr. Hutton knew the name of every nobleman's seat they passed, and he generally had an anecdote to tell of them, which in some way included his son. William Bouverie was happy in his mother's childlike delight, and in Bernicia's pleasant chattering and unfeigned high spirits. And thus, through the length of England, by old historic cities and lovely hamlets, slowly but happily, they came to Cresswell Castle. They had stayed the last night of

their journey at Yettington, and about noon the next day came in sight of the castle; its gray, massive strength spreading for nearly a hundred feet across the green hill in front of them. The June sunshine was over all its façade and turrets, and the Cresswell standard floated proudly from the central tower.

Harry and Claire had been apprised of their approach, and were watching for them; and for the next two weeks there was such splendid entertaining, such exhibition of North Country games, such mounting and riding and racing, such trout fishing in bosky glens, such happy picnicing lunches between morning and afternoon catches, such evenings of conversation and wild Border music and song, as Cresswell had never before seen, even in the proudest days of its past history, and as William Bouverie and his friend had never dreamed of, but which they both thoroughly enjoyed. For the business which had brought them to Cresswell was satisfactorily decided. Harry proved himself generous and Claire's guardians had only to look around them to see that he was prudent and well able to keep and improve the estate of which he was lord and master. So William Bouverie went back to London satisfied that Claire's heart had chosen wisely for her, and Mr. Hutton was never weary of informing everyone he spoke to, that he had been on a visit to Sir Harry Cresswell at Cresswell Castle, Northumberland; and what he saw there, and what he did there furnished him with conversation for the future, in all companies and under all circumstances.

As for madame, she was happier than she had ever been in her whole life. Her nature, naturally noble, expanded with the freedom of her new experience.

The mountains, the great silent moors, the music of the running streams, the natural song of birds, the tangled sweetness of the large garden, the wealth of its berries and fruits, the murmur of its colony of bees in their straw skeps above the lavender beds—all these things were as fresh to her as to a child; and she was old enough to have found again her child's heart, and to enjoy them with a natural simplicity and single-mindedness. Then, beside, there was the joy of Harry's constant presence; the joy of watching him in his proper position; the satisfaction of remembering the part she had taken toward restoring him to it; and the pride and pleasure she experienced in his affectionate respect for her person, and in his pronounced deference to her opinions and wishes.

But madame's glad and joyful contentment was not entirely shared by Bernicia. Cresswell had in some measure disappointed her, and she did not find life there as delightful as she expected to find it. The castle in its central portion had been restored and refurnished with the utmost splendour, and there were men at work on the outer wings and turrets, under the personal direction of Harry and Claire. But when the admiration for the new wore off, then Bernicia regretted the old. She found among the cottages her mother's worn and frayed armchair, and she bought it, and had it taken to her newly furnished chamber, and Tarsset mended and polished it, dropping tears upon her work, and talking the while to Bernicia of the days that were gone forever.

The new lady of Cresswell was not like the last lady. She had been accepted, but she had not yet reached

the heart of any of her servants or tenants. And Bernicia was keenly conscious of that change which invariably separates the very friends of girlhood, when one of them marries. She had never in London found it difficult to spend whole days with Claire; they had always plenty to talk about. Now there was no confidence between them, for Claire's affairs were Harry's affairs, and she guarded all about Harry with an honour that was slightly tinged with jealousy. She liked to think there were circumstances and intentions which none but herself shared with her husband. She was a little piqued at Harry's frankness with his grandmother and sister; if they were to be made free of her life, she wanted to be herself the donor of the grace—it was less pleasant to feel that they expected it, as Harry's kindred.

So there was often little unexpressed coldnesses which Bernicia felt, without having any apparent reason for complaint. And perhaps she had less reason than she imagined; for it was natural that Claire should be reticent about her married life; it was necessary she should assume the dignity of her position; and, as she was eminently one of those women who feel it a duty to look well to the ways of her household, it followed that she had little time for the petty frivolities and speculations in which she had once passed so many hours with her friend.

But Bernicia took none of these things into her consideration. Claire had always been eager to talk to her about Harry when Harry was her lover; why was she so averse to speak of Harry when he was her husband? Before her marriage she had deferred constantly to her friend's superior knowledge, and had ad-

mired and imitated her; why, then, as Lady Cresswell, did she hold herself with such reticent dignity that Bernicia found it very difficult to advise her in any matter? If she did so, Claire was sure to reply, "I will consult Harry. He will know what is best to be done." As for her small importances in her new position as mistress of a great household, they irritated Bernicia. She remembered her mother's easy indifference to the matter, her sweet familiarities with her inferiors, her natural tolerance for the ignorance of servants who had never been beyond their own hills and valleys. She thought Claire too orderly, too particular, too careful, too sensible of her own position, her wealth, and her various other excellencies. And though she would not say these things to madame, she suffered Tarsset to see her disapproval in many ways.

As the months wore on she began to long for London. She was tired of riding with Harry, tired of his "improvements." The fine families in the neighbourhood were not interesting. Madame wearied her with perpetual praise of Harry, and Harry himself was not quite the same Harry. He had become absorbed in Cresswell. He spoke of every acre of the land, and every stone of the castle, as if they were the only land and stone in England. He felt the great outlay of money necessary, and he was economical. Bernicia said "he was catching the trading spirit from his wife." But in truth, no change had come to Harry, but the change which comes lawfully with great responsibilities. In London he had not felt them, for he had then been bent only on securing the woman of his heart's desire; but when they touched him on

every side, he bound himself with their obligations, and was more sober and thoughtful under them.

So there were often coldness and shadow in the splendid home, not the less positive because it was unacknowledged, and therefore unforgiven. One morning in September Bernicia took a scamper over the hills with Harry. They were tempted by the brisk air and lovely sunshine to a longer ride than they had intended, and lunch was delayed, and the household thrown out of order. Bernicia was in high spirits, however, and Harry was laughing at her, and with her, as they leaped from their saddles, in a little tempest of hurry and excitement. Claire smiled faintly, and said never an angry word, but in five minutes she had managed to so cool their enthusiasm and their exuberant tempers that the meal was finished in the most decorous silence. There had not been one cross word, not one unpleasant look, yet Bernicia left the table in a passion which caused Claire to look after her in astonishment, and to ask Harry, "Pray, now, what is the matter with your sister?"

"Some feminine vexation," he answered promptly. "Ask yourself about it, Claire. She was all good nature and vivacity with me." And Claire sighed and looked at madame, who smiled back at her with a bland unconsciousness.

But Bernicia, alive with temper from head to boot, had flown to Tarsset to explain herself.

"I wish I were with Fanny!" she cried. "Fanny scolded me, and I scolded Fanny, and then we kissed each other, and there was an end of the worst of our troubles. Oh, Tarsset, I want to go back to Fanny! I want to go back to London."

"I don't wonder, miss. Lady Claire is very good, but blood is thicker, aye, and it's kinder, than water. And London is none so bad."

"Oh, Target! do you want to go back too? I am so happy."

"I won't leave you, miss. Places are pretty well, but people are better. And some people spoil places. I loved the old Cresswell. I won't break my heart to leave the new Cresswell."

Then they had a little confidence, and after it Bernicia went to madame and rushed into the middle of her troubles and desires at once, one complaint upon the neck of another. Madame did not contradict her in anything; indeed, she listened with a sympathy that greatly pleased and comforted her granddaughter, and when she spoke, it was to assure her of her desire.

"I have been already talking to Harry," she said, "about returning to London. It is in the way of his interest to do so. In a few months he will have to accept the entire charge of his wife's estate. The investments belonging to it are mainly in London, and he must be there to understand them. And of course Harry must have a home in town; he can be in London at least half the year. I do not wish to come here again, but I want my children around me as much as possible."

"Fanny will always be near you."

"And I hope you will not be far away, Bernicia. Harry tells me you have a lover called Campbell, who is all he could desire for you, and that with him you would live mainly in London. I want you near me, Bernicia, so if you can marry him let me be happy."

Then Bernicia kissed her grandmother and went away comforted by the hope of seeing her sister again so very soon.

Toward the dinner hour there was a different atmosphere in the house; a sense of something uncommon, which yet was pleasantly uncommon. The feeling was so evident that it pervaded the corridors and the stairways and the upper rooms with a sense of peace and of humanity at its best. Bernicia bowed her restless mood to it, and went down at the dinner hour determined to be happy. George Whitefield was sitting with Harry; and she knew then, the master spirit in the house. He had come for two days only, but they were wonderful days to the lonely hamlet among the hills of the Humber. All the next day men were riding hither and thither, shouting to the shepherds on the hills the tidings: and carrying it into the "keeps" and halls of the neighbouring gentry, so that at five o'clock the following afternoon there was a great congregation on the sloping meadows of Cresswell.

And Whitefield remembered that he was speaking mainly to shepherds, and he preached to them of David, whom God chose from the sheepfolds "when he was following the ewes great with young; that he might feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." And the sun set as he spoke, and the sweet gray gloaming fell over the land, but no one moved. His beautiful face and form, vibrating with life and feeling, rivetted all eyes; his words, resonant and musical, thrilled all hearts, pierced all consciences, and held both young and old breathless. For this God-fraught, love-fraught man showed them, as no one had

ever before done, the relationship of man to God as an immortal and accountable being, guilty, but yet redeemed.

He preached until the gloaming was lost in the light of the full yellow harvest moon, and then the people began to slowly and reluctantly disperse. The women stopped in little groups to talk; the men wandered silently to their folds on the fell-sides; the few gentry who had been present galloped away, each one his own road homeward, and the party from the castle began to leisurely take the shortest way back to it. Madame had not been present, and Tarsset had remained with her. Madame was afraid of the damp, and Tarsset was resolved not to listen to the preaching of a clergyman against whom the bishops inveighed. So Mr. Whitefield walked with Harry and Sir Richard Hardwicke, and Claire and Lady Hardwicke and Bernicia followed. Many of the villagers had gathered along the route, and to some of the very aged, Mr. Whitefield said a few cheering words, while the young mothers lifted their little children to his arms for a blessing; so that they were constantly delayed by one person or another.

Bernicia felt suddenly tired of this high tide of spiritual feeling, and she fell behind her party to gossip a little with her favourite, Gammer Hole. Gammer had seen everybody at the preaching, and if others had been too interested to notice the party of Yetholmn gypsies who mingled with the crowd she had not. She knew right well there would be empty hen roosts among the farmers, and lost watches among the gentry, to pay them for their presence. It was a relief to return to such a material plane, though Ber-

nicia sighed as she did so, and wished it were otherwise; even while she frankly acknowledged that it rested her.

"And I will not hurry myself homeward," she thought, as she turned into the sweet, silent garden. "I am tired of being talked to, and I am tired of talking. I will sit in this heavenly moonlight and think a little."

Her heart was beating to its best influence; she mused over her past and was sorry for its follies and mistakes, and naturally she remembered Lord Rashleigh, for he had been intimately associated with most of them, and she wondered to find herself forgetting his beauty, his grace, his rank, even his patient determined love for herself, in that one memory of his human kindness to his servant. She had had nothing to do with this action, and yet above all else it impressed her. She tried to put it away, to think of him rather, coming spent and breathless and laughing into her presence at Richmond with the news of Harry's pardon, of his quarrel with her in the garden there, of his farewell among the Christmas greens; but all memories were lost in that one memory of the man nursing, through those terrible days and nights, his dying servant. It filled her imagination. As she sat there, moved by the hour and all its sacred and lovely influences, she knew that the gay courtier had touched only her fancy. It was this solitary mourner by his servant's grave that stirred her deepest feeling and her noblest nature. This was the man she loved. If ever she had the opportunity again, she was resolved he should feel it. Then, if the voice of her heart had been audible, she would have heard herself call him, with a passionate longing.

Presently she was aware of footsteps on the flagged walk, leading toward the large apple tree under which she was sitting. She made a fixed determination not to go into the house. She knew it was Harry coming for her. She was wanted to talk, or to sing, or to help Claire, or to amuse Lady Hardwicke, and she was resolved to do none of these things. "It is far better to sit alone in the moonlight," she thought, "and I shall tell Harry I must have a few moments, now and then, to get acquainted with myself. I suppose Claire has sent for me. Well, I will not go."

Swift as these reflections were, the hurried steps overtook them, and as they came closer, some peculiarity, not Harry's, arrested her attention. She stooped forward and looked at the approaching figure; it was slim, and elegant, and bareheaded, but it was not Harry. It was the man she had been dreaming of; it was Lord Francis Rashleigh. He had answered that cry of her heart; he was coming swift as her desire. She stood up, she put out her hands, she lifted her head to meet him. Some wondrous feeling, some mighty attraction enveloped her as in an atmosphere, and they really met in each other's arms; though there was no outward expression of such embracing. Yet some influence just as potent gave assurance to her lover. He stood before her; he said:

"I am here again, Bernicia. I have been east and west, and you have drawn me like a magnet back to you."

She smiled at him so kindly and so brightly that he dared to take her hands and ask:

"Adorable Bernicia! Is it still to be *No?*"

She shook her head a little, and looking into his face with shining eyes, said softly, "*No.*"

"Then at last, at last, it is *Yes!*" and he drew her within his arms, and bent his face to catch the happy word. And she said with a great gladness: "It is *Yes*, with all my heart!"

And no tongue or pen is free of such blessed language as followed this confession. The hearts and the lips of these two only knew its meaning. To other mortals its sweet music and sweeter pauses would have been as difficult to translate as the nesting-song of the bluebird, or the midnight ecstasy of the love-enraptured nightingale.

All such transporting moments are necessarily of short duration; the soul bound to its "house of clay, whose foundations are in the dust" cannot long escape from its conditions and necessities, and Bernicia remembered the speculations which her continued absence would be likely to cause. Then also she remembered for the first time since their strange meeting to ask Lord Rashleigh "by what fortune he had found her, just in that place, and at that hour," and he answered:

"It was my happy fate to arrive when only Madame Bouverie and your woman were in the castle. Madame gave me welcome and refreshment, and I told her all my love and hopes and fears, and asked for her help and favour. She wished me success, and as soon as she perceived that you were not with your brother and his friends, she showed me a private door into the garden, and told me to seek you there, 'straight forward and turn to the right,' she said; 'and I think you will find Bernicia on the bench under the great apple

tree.' And oh, my adorable girl, I found you there! and with you love, and joy, and the greatest good fortune I shall ever know in this life."

"But now we must think of others as well as ourselves. Claire is already wondering, and she will stir Harry to wonder; and Sir Richard and Lady Hardwicke are with us, and Mr. Whitefield also."

"Mr. Whitefield! Yes, madame told me so. Oh, Bernicia, I have a delightful idea! What do you say? Shall Mr. Whitefield marry us to-morrow?"

"You take my breath away! No, indeed, sir! Do you imagine I will have such a hole-and-corner marriage as that would be? It is out of the question! I will be married in St. Paul's and nothing less than the Bishop of London shall put you through your questions. And the court and the town shall hear you answer them."

"Oh, my charmer!" laughed Lord Rashleigh; "I shall answer them to the whole world."

"Well, sir, these things at least. How much more sister Fanny will insist on, I know not."

"I think if she has her way, she will send us bounding into matrimony with a flourish of trumpets; but I am prepared to go all lengths to call you my own."

In this supposition they were quite correct. Before Bernicia reached London, Fanny had made the most extravagant plans for the wedding. "Claire's," she said, "was a wedding under a bushel, and Bernicia's will be the last in the family, and we must set the newspapers going, and women talking, and make a nine-days-and-threefold wonder of it." And Lord Pomfret was ready to do anything that would so con-

spicuously blend his name with such a favourite of the royal family as Lord Rashleigh was known to be.

Bernicia had done well for herself, and her homecoming was a little triumph, though Lady Pomfret was obliged to wait for nearly three weeks for her return after the news of the engagement had been received. Naturally, she with was cross every one of the party for this delay. "Why did not Bernicia hurry? The idea of waiting for Claire, who was always slow. Or for madame, who was not able to travel quickly. Or for Harry, who always wanted to see every old castle and battle ground within ten miles off the road." She got up in the morning planning and hoping, she went to bed at night disappointed and scolding; but the longest wait comes to an end, and at last she received word that her sister was within ten miles of London, and would be with her to lunch.

She was as impatient as a child for a holiday. Her ears perceived no sound but the rumble of wheels, and finally the welcome sound did really come into the courtyard. She was at the door in an instant. On the very steps she took Bernicia in her arms; and then shook her a little by her shoulders; and then kissed her on both her cheeks, and twice on her lips.

"You are as lovely and as provoking as ever!" she cried, taking her by the hand into her own room, and while helping her to remove her cloak and bonnet, calling directions about the trunks, and the lunch, and the fire in Bernicia's apartment.

"I am so glad you got rid of everyone! Where have you left the rest of your party?"

"Harry and Claire went with grandmother to

Bloomsbury, until Harry can rent a house suitable to his rank; and Lord Rashleigh left us at the gate. He was sure I would wish to be alone with you for a little, and he will not call until the dinner hour."

"A very Daniel in wisdom! Now, child, tell me everything. First, about Claire and Harry; do they agree yet like treble and bass, or does Harry now blow his own trumpet? Tell me about the castle, and how it looks and what grandmother said and did, and all about yourself and Francis Rashleigh. What kind of a wedding have you thought of? Where are you going after it? and what are you going to do?"

In such conversation one hour slipped into another without note and without weariness. In fact, until the chiming of a clock in the next room alarmed them they forgot time; then both rose hurriedly to their feet. "We have just half an hour to dress," said Fanny, "and look well to *how* you dress yourself, Bernicia. A woman may keep her lover for a century if she has plenty of pretty gowns. Let me lend you a beauty, an apricot silk with cherry ribbons. Men love a woman to be in a glow of colour."

Lord Pomfret and Lord Rashleigh were standing laughing and talking on the hearthrug when the ladies came down together, both of them gay with the shimmer of silk, and the flash of jewels, and the *frou-frou* of ribbons and lace. And if Lord Rashleigh was proud to the skies of his bride's loveliness, Lord Pomfret was no less proud of his charming wife. He paid Fanny such devoted and ardent attention that she vowed "he had caught the love fever from Lord Rashleigh, and she would be compelled to marry him again in order to make him sensible." Upon which

Lord Pomfret declared, "the remedy only increased the disease, and that he now carried as much love in his heart as he was able to live with."

Harry and Claire had promised, if possible, to join them in the evening; but they did not come and Fanny said with an air of gentle raillery "that sometimes the impossible was bearable"; and anyone might see that Bernicia and Rashleigh were a full cup to her. Indeed, there was as joyful a company in the Pomfret drawing-room that night as it had ever seen or was likely to see. They talked of Lord Rashleigh's adventures abroad. They talked of the wedding and the wedding garments and the wedding guests. They smiled at the tribulations of past love, and in the light that brightened the vistas adown the future they looked smiling into each other's eyes. And Bernicia sang again of "Bonnie Bobbie Shafto," and the "Little Brown Man of Cresswell," and all the other old, old songs that touched her lover's heart at their first meeting. There was so much to say, so much to recall, so much to anticipate; and ever and anon as a door opened, they could hear the song and laughter and merrymaking in the servants' hall, where also they were drinking Miss Bernicia's health, and speculating on her marriage, and the pleasures and changes it might bring with it.

But joy wearies as well as grief, and it were little wonder if Bernicia began to look pale and droop her white eyelids about midnight. With smiles and kisses she withdrew to a little sleep and forgetfulness. And when Lord Rashleigh had also said "good-night," Lady Fanny handed her lord his pipe, and stirred the fire into a blaze and drew a stool to his side. Her

bright face, held in her jewelled hands, was full of happy speculation.

"Speak, John!" she said. "Have you nothing to say about this delightful event?"

"Egad, Fanny! It is a very fortunate event for us. It will increase my court favour and give me political influence I shall be glad to have."

"John! I am ashamed of you! How can you talk of court favour and political influence in the same breath with Francis and Bernicia? They are a poem, a picture, a play all fire and tenderness. Francis Rashleigh is a lover beyond all lovers; the most handsome and the most irresistible. And Bernicia, who adores him, is the most beautiful and loving of women. John, they will be the happiest couple in the whole world!" and she looked at her husband with shining eyes, and a face dimpling all over with smiles.

He dropped his pipe quite recklessly and took her in his arms. "By my soul, sweet love!" he cried, "you must except John and Fanny Pomfret. I will stake the last penny I own on it. Bernicia and Francis are just beginning to be happy. We have twelve years the best of them, Fanny!"

She kissed him then; she took his large brown hands in her own, and repeated her words with a charming insistence:

"Indeed, sir, they will be the happiest couple in the whole world—except John and Fanny Pomfret."

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